■ Entertainment
Lea Salonga: Entertainer of the Year

■ Across / A17
Radioman shot in General Santos City

■ Lifestyle
18 ways of looking at a mall

■ Sports
Blue Eagles complete first-round sweep

Tanong ng Bayan / A21
One-woman policy: Ukay ba sa machong Pinoy?

High oil prices threaten Asian economic growth

SINGAPORE—Asia's economies, including that of the Philippines, have been able to withstand the year's surge in oil prices but the relentless climb is starting to take its toll and high growth rates are seen in jeopardy, according to analysts.

Crude futures prices reached historic highs at nearly $45 a barrel last week, creating a

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Malacañang backpedals on nuke plant conversion

By John Laog Jaculbia

AFTER stirring up a hornet's nest, Malacañang now appears to be backpedaling on the idea of converting the mothballed and hugely controversial Bataan nuclear power plant into a gas-fired facility.

More than that, it now admits that the idea

Palace insists on oil tax

Gov't-backed bill seeks ₱2/liter hike in levy to raise ₱29.7B

By Carlos Pablo

All 38 opposing world oil prices were not enough. Filipino consumers are being asked to "bite the bullet" and bear new rates on petroleum products.

Rep. Joey Salceda (Lakas-Kampi, Albay), in-house crusader of the House of Representatives, said an administration-backed measure was seeking a ₱2 per liter increase in taxes on petroleum products.

Salceda said the petroleum tax, as embodied in House Bill No. 1103, would be the biggest single source of revenue raising the eight tax measures that President Macapagal-Arroyo is asking Congress to pass.

If enacted into law, the measure would generate ₱29.7 billion for the cash-strapped administration, according to Salceda. HB 1103 is authored by Rep. Danilo Suarez (LP, Quezon).

"Clearly, the petroleum tax offers the most substantial potential as a source of revenue raising revenue flow," Salceda said in a study.

The second biggest source would be the increase of taxes for "sin products," such as tobacco and alcohol-based drinks. It is expected to bring in ₱14 billion.

The other tax measures that Malacañang is pushing involve shifting from net income to gross income taxation, imposing the value-added tax system, taxing unrealized profits of telecommunications firms, reconciling fiscal incentives, instituting a targeted infirmity, and creating a performance-driven system for revenue agencies.

Rik Deveza urged Congress to pass the measures because, according to her, improving revenue collection alone would not be enough to cover the budget deficit and finance new programs. The deficit is expected to hit ₱200 billion this year.

But the president has to be adopted in the House of Representatives, it must get the support of more than half of the 226 members of the chamber.

But a number of members of the House have hinted a penny to oppose the new tax measures. A total of 130 representatives

DR. JONATHAN Flavier with wife Patricia and children, Paulina and Carlo Ito: compassion on manhood

A TALE OF TWO VASECTOMIES

Take the cut, family planning expert tells Pinoy macho men

By Veit Contreras

HOW CURIOUS June "Boy Dagis (Cielo Dad)" Garcia ever forgot to screen-trained comedian Arlo Melendez addressed the crowd outside the barangay hall of Pasong Tamo, Quezon City, he has virtually to the small white inside, leaving his five vasectomy.

"I was done in just 10 minutes. The speech went even longer," said Garcia, 38, now strolling with amusement how he took advantage of a visiting medical mission in March last year and the "the right thing" for his young yet undeniably large family.

For someone who had fathered seven children in a span of 14 years, but who at best could make just around ₱600 a day peddling soap bars and shampoos in the streets, this high school dropout may see

be the spur who would debate or lose sleep over the moral and religious questions attached to artificial birth control methods.

What seems clear is that he and countless other Filipino men represent a lucrative market for the Pinoy's much-touted macho image. Wallstrich finally sharing the office with their wives and men taking the lead in family planning.

"My wife was willing [to undergo tubal ligation], but the doctor advised against it because of her high blood pressure," he said in an interview on Friday. "That's when I decided that it should be me."

Garcia also explained that if it was his wife Nilda, 36, who had gone under the knife, she would have needed to rest for two to three months, "whereas I can go back to work in just three days" after the operation.

He also admitted being driven by remorse at seeing his pre-adolescent children forced to share in the chore of taking care of the younger ones. His eldest is a 12-year-old son, while the youngest, also a boy, is only 11 months old. Between them are siblings aged 10, 8, 7, 4, and 2. "The first four children are currently studying in a public school.

A world away from Garcia's Payatas is Dr. Jonathan David Flavier of Metro Heights, also in Quezon City, the man

STREET vendor June "Boy Dagis" Garcia with his wife and children, Nelvin, Melvin, Noeven, Wilson, Jovi Jr., Bobb and Rose Sharing improved sexual pressure with his neighborhood drinking buddies.

Carl's so handsome, twins' ma gushes

By Cathy Gulotta
Correspondent

"OH, MY God!" Arlene Aguirre gushed when doctors removed the dressing from her 2-year-old son's face. "He's so handsome!"

Dr. David Stadtfeldberg, a plastic surgeon at The Children's Hospital of Montefiore Medical Center (CHMC) in New York, witnessed the happy moment at Aguirre's bedside. It had been less than three days since the boy, Carl, was surgically separated from his twin, Clarence, in a 17-hour procedure, the last of four.

The twins had been fused in the head. Now in separate beds and still sedated to keep them from moving too much, they were said to be opening their eyes intermittently, and reacting to their mother's voice.

Stadtfeldberg and Arlene's sonin-law had been specially gratifying for him as a member of the surgical team. At this point, he said, the best part was that Clarence and Carl were beginning to thrive each on his own, with the thrilling

Nutribun revived to feed Baguio schoolchildren

By Desiree Caluza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—Remember the Nutribun?

Every day for a week now, business woman Chapa Torres has been rising at dawn to line up for seven and limit for two loaves of the once-fortified bread, with which she feeds about a hundred

BACK TO HOMEGROUND
Bishop Oscar Alcaraz Solis, the first Filipino to be ordained a bishop in the United States, is welcomed by his sisters, Helen Solis (left) and Celia Tapia, upon his arrival at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. (See story on Page A2.)

RP starts first of 7 lifetimes of healing environment wounds

By Leonardo M. Camacho
Contributor

EDITOR'S NOTE: The author is the commissioner for science, technology and environment of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) office in the Philippines.

COMMENTARY

AFTER 16 months of monitoring the status of the Philippine environment, we are now in the healing stage (before it is too late).

Considering the present state of our forests, mountains and bodies of water, it may take seven lifetimes to heal the wounds.

But no matter. We start the first lifetime now.

By a stroke of fate, our healing partners in Environment Planning Secretary Romulo Neri, who is also the director general of the National Economic and Development Authority.

Luckily for all of us, Neri agrees that the new paradigm shift to eco-economy is the smart thing to do.

As a matter of fact, he informed to President Macapagal-Arroyo his plans that consider the economy and the environment together—in other words, sustainable development. He hinted for reforestation, responsible mining and preservation of fish sanctuaries which, in their totality, will create more jobs, a goal of the Arroyo administration.

For the first time in a long time, we are going to do social wedding in the Cuevas Shadey range.

A group of volunteer environmentalists, who are alumni of Class '64 of the Batocaning Quezon Civil Elementary School and Class '68 of La Salle Greenhills and led by Gene

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

MONDAY, AUGUST 9, 2004

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Ebdane insists on arming media

By Christian Esguerra and Christina G. Arevalodo

DESPITE the criticism, Philippine National Police chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. is standing pat on his proposal to allow reporters to carry firearms in the wake of the sack of killings of media practitioners.

PNP spokesperson Chief Supt. Leopoldo Bataoil yesterday said Ebdane's office would still issue gun permits to journalists whose lives are under threat.

In a span of one week, two prominent journalists were gunned down by unidentified armed men while another narrowly escaped an attempt on his life.

Bataoil said Ebdane was willing to relax the rules if only to painfully address the concerns of newsmen whose lives may be in danger.

But media practitioners, like all other applicants, would have to go through the normal procedure, including passing the exams by firearms experts of Intelligence Group (PITOG), he said.

Journalists applying for a PTC-FOR must provide solid evidence that someone is indeed trying to harm or kill him, Solis added.

Ebdane's suggestion for journalists to carry firearms was just one of the measures the PNP had proposed.

Ebdane said the best way to end the problem once and for all is therefore to solve the crimes and send the perpetrators to jail.

The latest journalist to be killed was Ariel Morales, a correspondent of the tabloid Bulgar and radio station dzRH, who was gunned down in Bacnar, Bataan on Feb. 20 in front of his home. Two days earlier, broadcast journalist Roger Mariano was killed in Sto. Cerdito, Ilocos Norte.

Quezon Senior Supt. Jose Mangonon, Batangas provincial police director, politics and local ambitions in the area had already pinpointed the suspects in the killing of Morales, he refused to elaborate.

In the case of Mariano, he said that Deputy Sheriff investigators were still looking into several angles in the killing.

"The PNP is doing everything to solve the cases," Solis insisted.

But Sandra Bocala, media practitioners' group spokesperson, insists that the cases when another broadcaster was shot early Sunday.

San Antonio, a reporter of GMA-7's local radio station dzBB, was allegedly shot in Guimba, Nueva Ecija by William Buan, said to be a bodyguard of world boxing champion Manny Pacquiao. (See story on Page A7.)

In the Senate, Estrada filed Senate Bills Nos. 1944 and 1945 on June 30, when he officially began his term as a senator, to address the plight of journalists, including the launch of the job.

In a statement, Estrada said the passage of the two measures had become "very urgent" following the murders of Mariano and Morales.

Estrada's first bill seeks to amend the Revised Penal Code to make the killing of journalists a crime of murder punishable by death.

The other bill "recognizes that journalists are constantly exposed to danger and they should be accorded the protection of the state as well." It mandates and encourages them to better perform their duties and responsibilities."

Senate hopes to get down to work

By Christine O. Avendaño

SENATORS are expected to begin getting down to committee work this week. Following the finalization of committee assignments.

Senate President Franklin Drilon yesterday said he would announce the final roster, which should give him to head what committee today, two weeks after unanimous hugging and decision-making over chairmanships began.

Drilon said that members of the majority had been offered committee chairmanships, adding that Majority Leader Sen. Francis Pangilinan had been chosen to handle the task.

"We can do our committee work this week," Drilon said.

The Senate has a total of 84 committees which conduct hearings on various areas of concern preparatory to the drafting of measures. Last week, Drilon announced who would chair 21 of the committees, but changes were apparently made because the minority said some of the committees were also offered to their members.

Drilon said the names of the senators to be assigned to two committees, Electoral Tribunal (SET)—were expected to be disclosed this week as well.

He said seven senators to be named to the 15-member SET would come from the majority and five would be selected from the minority. Four senators from the majority and two from the minority would be assigned to the SET.

Minority Leader Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., meanwhile, said the minority senators would hold a caucus today "to tackle the matter of committee chairmanships," among other things.

Pimentel said the committees offered to the minority by the majority remained unchanged.

Last week, he disclosed that the chairmanships of six committees—on women, cultural communities, banking, public information, social justice and cooperatives—had been offered to the minority.

"We will take a look at the proposal [in order to exercise]," Pimentel said.

LOREN Legarda whispers to Rizi Tricia Limcaoco and Sen. Alfredo Lim during the thanksgiving Mass and party she gave for her supporters yesterday in Makati City. AP PHOTO

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Loren: Plans, protest and Tony's siblings

By Margaux C. Ortiz and Fe Zamora

"I WILL not hide anew"

Re-lect senator and two-time presidential candidate Loren Legarda yesterday announced her return to the private sector during a thanksgiving Mass and party celebrated at the Manila Polo Club in Forbes Park, Makati City.

Legarda stressed that she would be gone from the political scene "only temporarily."

She added, "I will still be accessible to the political opposition but in my capacity as private citizen. He and make sure that the people will always believe in us."

Legarda said that aside from wanting to be the results of the protest she and Fernando Poe Jr. had filed before the Presidential Electoral Tribunal, she would be busy writing a book on the parallels between the government and the communist rebels and her role as the arbiter of peace against bold by the rebels in the past years.

"I promised Diamond Bookstore that I would write their books in three years," she said.

She said there have been invitations for her to rejoin the media, where she was a popular broadcaster for two decades before she entered politics.

Legarda also said she would be most active in spearheading the Justicing Filipino and Bayan Legarda Barrio Concrete Foundation.

She would attend dinner with President Macapagal-Arroyo and Vice-President Noli de Castro for a reconciliation with her "extraverted in terms" to not in Legarda's calendar.

"It was unfortunate for them, but not for me. Supposedly what They allowed themselves to be used," Legarda said of Council and Amelita Lorenzo. Her siblings of her husband Antonio Gaviola who had openly campaigned against her in the Senate race.

"It would have been different if they were my friends and they were campaigning against me, but we were never close, so there's nothing to mend," Legarda said.

In the heat of the political campaign, Arnaldo said she did not participate the former Legarda siblings but the brother was allegedly invited to Cebu campaigns Arnaldo also said she and Council had not spoken to Antonio for years.

Legarda also disclosed in a "difficult tactic" the move of Antonio Gaviola to resurrect the criminal cases against Poe.

This is not the lawyers, who had brought a similar disqualification case against Poe in March, said the move could not file an election protest because the case is a subject from Filipino citizens.

"That [case] had already been dismissed by the Supreme Court," Legarda said, "so their move is a different tactic." With Christina B. Avendaño

1st Pinoy bishop in US arrives to retrace roots

BISHOP Oscar Aparicio Solis, the first Filipino to be ordained bishop in the United States, was welcomed at a mass celebrated in his honor in Manila and Marivi Soliz.

Solis arrived at 6:45 a.m. on board the Philippine Airlines flight 101 from Los Angeles, accompanied by well-wishers led by his sisters Celia Soliz-Espiritu and Helen Soliz.

"This is truly an exciting homecoming for me," said Solis. "I will be retracing important milestones that formed me and, and I will be visiting places that have been a part and parcel of my life and ministry. Most important of all, I am coming home with a spirit of deep gratitude."

This is Solis's first trip to the Philippines since his ordination to the episcopacy and appointment as Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles on Feb. 10. Solis has been busy finalizing himself with his new ministry and coordinating outreach pastoral efforts for all ethnic groups within the archdiocese.

His return to the Philippines will also be a significant homecoming of sorts—with Cebu City as a province-only class which is scheduled to hold a Mass and family reunion.

Friends and well-wishers from Manila, his hometown of San Juan, Marivi Soliz, as well as from the Marcos monarch's hometown in Gilmanian [illegible] are eagerly waiting to greet the priest today.

During his stay in the Philippines, Solis will have an audience with President Macapagal-Arroyo, the Papal Nuncio to the Philippines, Antonio Franco and Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales.

SUERTRES 6 6 6 (2:00 p.m. draw) EZ2 12 28

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Sub-Editor: Canon B. Rivera, Jose G. Dayanghirang

Scalawag-hunters lead PNP awardees

THE WRECKAGE of the Isuzu Trooper of Undersecretary Nestor Perez Jr. sits at the impounding area of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority at the Ortigas Center in Pasig City. RUDY SANTOS

By Rahmat C. Tarabay Jr.

AMID the silling image of the police, the good cops take center stage today.

The National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) will honor its policemen who have shown exemplary performance and devotion to duty[1] in recognition rites in Camp Bagong Diwa at 8 a.m.

Leading the list of awardees are members of the so-called Heavenly Teams, who will receive the citation of Medalya Ng Kasanayan.

Going after scalawags

Members of the Heavenly Teams go undercover and arrest gun runners on complaints against policemen and other persons of authority.

They usually operate in civilian clothes, sometimes armed with only hidden video cameras.

The teams have arrested at least 117 suspected extortionists since they were organized in February, and NCRPO spokesperson Chief Insp. Siaw Rosalamento.

However, at least 53 of those arrested, for alleged extortion were themselves policemen.

During today's ceremonies, officials of the Central Police District will also receive Medalya Ng Kadakilaan and Medalya Ng Kasanayan.

The awards will be for the "effective implementation of the six-S district force management operations" during the inauguration of President Macapagal-Arroyo, a statement from the NCRPO explained.

The Mandaluyong police will also receive a unit award for exemplary performance for successful anti-criminality efforts.

Mandaluyong cited

Its chief, Senior Supt. Eriberto Villanueva, will received the Medalya Ng Kasanayan for his leadership qualities.

The NCRPO will also give awards to representatives from the business, transport and media sectors, who have contributed to the police campaign against criminality.

Aside from the medals they will be getting, the awardees will be treated to free lunch after the rites.

But before going away the awards, the NCRPO will present the 396 new policemen who recently completed their seven-month training.

The graduation rites begin at 7 a.m.

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Presidential assistant dies in Pasig City car crash

By Margaux C. Ortiz

A MALACAÑANG official was killed in a vehicular accident yesterday morning in Pasig City.

Undersecretary Nestor Perez Jr., 53, Presidential Assistant for Rivers, Airports, was killed when a Toyota Prado hosting a diplomatic plate [illegible] crashed into the Isuzu Trooper at or about 5:20 a.m. on the C-5/Ortigas flyover.

Perez, who was driving the vehicle, was dead on arrival at the Medical City Hospital, said SPO2 Alexander Galang. His wife, Evangeline, sustained serious injuries.

The Prado's driver, Jason Ador, 25, of Blue Ridge, Quezon City, was also seriously injured and was taken to the Quirino Medical Center.

Police said Ador was driving southward Makati City when Ador's vehicle, which was on the opposite lane, crossed the center island and hit the left portion of the victim's Trooper.

Perez served as Manila councilor from 1988 to 1998 before he represented the 2nd district of the city in congressman from 1998 to 2001.

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Malacañang backpedals on nuke plant conversion

is a rehash of an old proposal which past administrations always evolved whenever confronted with power crises.

Pros and cons

President Macapagal-Arroyo's deputy spokesperson Ricardo Saludo said yesterday that the Department of Energy should weigh the pros and cons of such a proposed conversion, including budgetary and safety concerns.

"Maybe it is best that the Department of Energy should be the one to make a statement on this matter because they are the ones who have information on the expenses to be incurred, if the plant will be operated, as well as arks are for or against it," Saludo said when asked on DWIZ radio if the conversion was the President's idea.

Asked if Mrs. Arroyo personally favored the idea, Saludo said, "This is a matter that is probably best left to the DOE. They will make a recommendation on whether or not any benefit could be gained out of this (plant)."

Saludo said the first consideration facing the government was to use power costs while providing for the needs of the country.

"Granted, we also need to look at the budget deficit. Will the conversion of the plant add to the expenses for the government? Third is the safety issues because some are saying that even if it is converted, there may still be some safety problems," he said.

Saludo admitted that the conversion plan was not original.

Doubtless idea

He recalled that the issue of converting the Bataan plant, built in 1984 at a cost of more than $2 billion, into a uranium-fuel facility was also discussed during the term of President Fidel Ramos.

"That proposal keeps coming back every time the issue of power and electricity rears," he said.

Saludo said the country continues to pay for the loans it obtained to construct the plant.

"We should not neglect that (financial obligation) because there will be a big implication (on the) two turn-out basis or, if we said.

Gas from Malampaya

In a speech last week, Mr. Arroyo cited the conversion of the Bataan plant as among the options in her program of energy savings and independence. The program calls for putting into operation four idle power plants, including the one in Bataan, as a step in achieving self-sufficiency in energy.

Mr. Arroyo said the Bataan plant could be powered by natural gas flowing from the significant gas find in Malampaya in Palawan—bringing the gas from off-shore Malampaya to the plant in Morong, Bataan. Govt could recall huge expenses, economic analysts have said.

The 620-MW Bataan plant has never been used since it was built 20 years ago during the regime of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. The $500 million in foreign loans the government borrowed for its construction has ballooned to more than $2 billion because of interest.

Monument to folly

In this day, the government, using taxpayers' money, pays $330,000 a day for the loan interest alone.

Several politicians have denounced the proposal to convert the plant—dubbed by Sen. Joker Arroyo as Marcos' "monument to folly"—into a gas-fired project.

But Minority Leader Sen. Aquilino (Nene) Pimentel Jr., who says he has always favored the conversion of the plant, yesterday called for a "scientific evaluation" of such a proposal.

"It seems it's a big facility for which we spent a huge amount of money and it's been lying idle," Pimentel said in a phone interview.

Regarding doubts on the feasibility of such a proposal, he said, "We don't know that until experts make an evaluation."

Norway

Pimentel said that some time ago, some Norwegians were "interested to see whether the plant could be converted into a gas-fired one."

"I think it had been done in Norway," he said.

A militant group of Bataanese urged Congress to stop the government from further paying the loans for the idle plant.

"The Filipino people are not obligated to honor those fraudulent loans. The country is in a moral position to reject payment of the Marcos dictatorship's loans. Let the masterminds of the (Bataan) project suffer the consequences of their crimes," Bonifacio Ilagan, national chair of the Bayan Muna Party-list group, said in a statement. With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Correction

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NPA postpones release of 2 soldier-hostages

By Christian Esguerra

THE POLICE have refused to budge while the military has remained silent on the conditions set by the New People's Army for the release of the two soldiers they continue to hold hostage for more than two months now.

This prompted the NPA to postpone the scheduled release of the two soldiers a few hold since March, the rebel group said Saturday.

The Philippine National Police will not respond to operations in the Sierra region as demanded by the Bayan Muna solons. Congressional, the NPA said in a statement sent to Inquirer.net Saturday.

"We cannot be blackmailed into suspending our counter-insurgency operations," Chief Supt. Edu Gallaza, PNP spokesperson, told the Inquirer. "We should not succumb to the leaders' pressure."

While the NPA was categorical in its position, the spokesman of the Philippine Army said the NPA demand for military suspension of operations in the rebel-infested region.

The NPA outlook came after 24 people were killed last week in the worst clashes between government forces and the Moro guerrillas in months.

In separate interviews last week, chief government negotiator Silvestre Bello III and his counterpart in the communist National Democratic Front, Luis Jalandoni, hinted that negotiations were ongoing for the release of Buenaventura and Sinsuat.

Jalandoni, who spends her time between Manila and Utrecht, the Netherlands, said the NPA was not asking for the release of political prisoners in Bicol nor was it asking a candidate on the NPA list, a concession granted by the release of the captives to allow her child with Filipino relatives to visit families.

The NPA said PARAMILITARY and Manalo were in hostage situations on May 27 and July 2, respectively.

Jalandoni clarified the negotiations of prisoner and military exchanges but said following an agreement between the NDF and the government panel.

But Jalandoni said no choice but to cancel the release with regret" amid escalating military offensives against the rebels. With AP

Supreme Court Doctrines

JUDICIAL ETHICS—Judges are the visible representatives of law and justice—Judges are the visible representatives of law and justice. They ought to be embodiments of competence, integrity and independence. In particular, judges are frontline officers in the administration of justice. It is therefore essential that they live up to the high standards demanded by the Code of Judicial Conduct. To be able to render substantial justice and to maintain public confidence in the legal system, they are expected to exhibit more than just a cursory acquaintance with statutes and procedural rules. Judicial competence requires more than [illegible] [illegible] Vicente Vargas-Santiago, Para Decisions, Alcantara Lumbo, A.M. No. MTJ-04-1501, [illegible]

BY G.B. Esta

The Daily Gospel

Monday, August 9, 2004
16th Week in Ordinary Time

1st Reading: Ex 1:8-14, 22-28
Gospel: Mt 11:25-27

While Jesus was in Galilee with the Twelve, he said to them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into human hands, and they will kill him; but he will rise on the third day." The Twelve were greatly grieved.

On entering the Capernaum, the Temple tax collectors came to Peter and asked him, "Does your master pay the temple tax?" He answered, "Certainly."

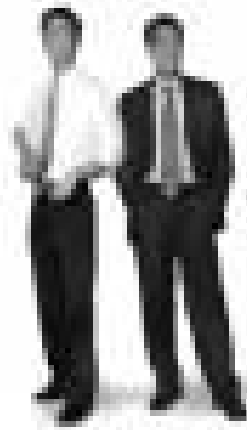
When Jesus entered the house, he immediately spoke ahead him, "What do you think, Simon? When you rulers or officials do the kings of the earth collect taxes or the taxes people? From strangers?" Then Jesus said to him, "Then sons, then, are exempt. But so as not to cause them people, go to the sea, throw in a hook and take the money of the first fish you catch. You will find a coin in its mouth. Take that and give it to them for me and for you."

Commentary

Jesus' power is not to control. At the time of Jesus there was a ground tax of 1/4 percent of one's grain and 20 percent of one's oil and wine. There was income tax of 1 percent. There was a poll tax which had to be paid by every male from the age of 14 to the age of 65, and by every female from the age of 12 to 65. In addition to that there was a duty of from 12 percent to 12.5 percent on all goods imported and exported. It was hard to pay such a variety of taxes and, as we might expect, there were many places where they were evaded. There was a tax on road carriages, and a tax on the wheels used in carts. That was payable even on goods brought overland, and there was the half-shekel temple tax which was over 20 years of age.

Everyone paid the temple tax. It became almost a badge of Jewish identity. But in some Diaspora Jews were not paid by a rule. Likewise in the Temple was called "the father's house," there Jesus is implicitly suggesting that the Temple was.

The implications went far beyond the simple case of Jesus, of course. Jesus was a Jewish Christian, serving the Jewish Christians, and no doubt the Temple tax was a burning question for them, as the quarrel between Jesus and the Pharisees makes really clear to us as we glance, just in passing, at earlier words, you don't have to fight every battle, you don't have to take on everybody, but only those who matter.



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DFA warns Asean on rich neighbors

By Jovanie Aning

THE DEPARTMENT of Foreign Affairs has cautioned other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations against pursuing a proposed new grouping with Asia's three economic giants—Japan, China and South Korea.

The feeling of Asean is that it should be a community with a small 'c' as opposed to a big 'C,' Undersecretary Antonio Carlos Villa-Vicente Salonga said.

Salonga said earlier versus manifestations by foreign policy experts in the region that the 10-member Asean should be the "driving force" in the proposed East Asian Community.

"The feeling of Asean is that it should be a community with a small 'c' as opposed to a big 'C' [small 'c' because we in Asean] still have to get our act together. We have to be integrated more fully in order to become a strong force vis-a-vis these developed countries," Castrence told reporters in a briefing.

There have been fears that in a heavily-formed East Asian Community, an already-weak Asean could easily be dominated by China, Japan and South Korea and become a battleground for their rivalries.

Seeking the Asean foreign ministers summit in Jakarta in June, it was agreed that the establishment of an EAC was a "long-term objective" that had to be developed through the existing Asean Plus Three mechanism.

An dialogue partners, China, Japan and South Korea maintain ties with Asean through the so-called "Asean Plus Three" and the Asean Regional Forum. China, South Korea and Malaysia have backed the formation of a more formal summit to replace this loose framework.

But Indonesian foreign ministry official Makarim Wibisono warned: "If we don't insist on being in the driver's seat, Asean countries will only be the tools of big countries to advance their agenda."

Asean, which marked its 37th founding anniversary yesterday, is currently working on its three-fold integration plan that would enhance security, economic and socio-cultural ties among member countries.

The plan of action for this integration is expected to be adopted during the Asean leaders' summit in Vientiane, Laos, in November.

Castrence said the "Asean Plus Three" countries themselves had proposed projects to assess their Ow organization could undertake to speed up regional integration.

"However, as one part in Asean, we don't have to think of projects that we ourselves know we need which we can promote for them, and that is one way of making sure that we are always included in everyone," she said.

The Philippines' special envoy to the Jakarta summit, Rodolfo Severino, said the Philippines has much to benefit from "Asean Plus Three," specifically in the area of economic and financial cooperation where there has been significant progress on regional monetary development.

He said strengthening linkages with Northeast Asia was in line with Asean's continued looking nearer and reflects the group's continued relevance and value to its international partners.

No great loss, Etta says of US action vs RP

SO BE IT?

Rep. Loretta Ann "Etta" Rosales (party list Akbayan) yesterday shrugged off the "serious" status of ring of the Philippines from the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq.

"It's better that we have been dropped from this coalition on the basis of our willingness to treat a human life and matter our national interest than risk this and continue to support US policies and actions that were based on a lie," Rosales said in a statement.

US Department of State spokesperson Richard Boucher said last week the Philippines was dropped from the coalition following the "substantial reduction" of its military contingent from Iraq as demanded by Iraqi insurgents who had captured Filipino truck driver Angelo de la Cruz and threatened to behead him.

On Friday US Ambassador to the Philippines Francis Ricciardone said the withdrawal of the Philippines from the coalition was "not official."

Rosales asserted that the Philippines "should accept with dignity and pride" the US decision.

"After all, the US Senate Intelligence Committee, building upon the findings of the 9/11 Commission, had said that there was no unimpeachable proof cited to support the main arguments for which the US went to war in Iraq," she said.

"This coalition is maintaining a highly immoral and illegal military presence in Iraq, and it is no big loss for our country not to have a part in it," Rosales added.

She maintained that a foreign policy independent of the US will "ensure the safety of our millions of overseas workers not just in the Middle East but even [where else the dangers of terrorist attacks lurks." Cecilia Pulido

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Kuwait bars Pinoy workers from crossing into Iraq

By Jerome Aning

THE KUWAITI interior ministry has directed its immigration officers not to allow Filipino workers across the country's border with Iraq.

The directive was implemented late last week at the border Iraq-Kuwait border crossing of Al-Jadily. Kuwaiti media reported yesterday.

The prohibition was made upon the request of the Philippine government due to security concerns following last month's seizure by Iraqi militants of truck driver Angelo de la Cruz.

The Philippines currently maintains a ban on the direct deployment of workers to Iraq. It has also called on countries surrounding Iraq—Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Turkey—to prevent Filipino workers from entering the embattled country.

Iraqi militants have been abducting and killing foreign workers to force their governments and employers to leave Iraq, and the United States has confirmed that it ordered the country.

Two weeks ago, Saudi Arabia also banned Filipino workers from crossing into Iraq.

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Water Tankings - Water Pipings
Water Fittings - Water Chemicals
Water Accessories - Water Bottles
Water Caps - Water Containers
Water Jugs - Water Cups
Water Dispensers - Water Machines
Water Systems - Water Equipment
Water Supplies - Water Products
Water Services - Water Solutions
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Eagles tame Tamaraws, complete 7-game romp

By Jasmine W. Paya

NOT even the defending champions could smear the Ateneo Eagles' pristine record.

Slick-shooting 1A Rondo drilled home 28 points, including a three-pointer with 24.4 seconds left, as the Eagles conquered the Far Eastern Tamaraws, 67-64, yesterday to complete a seven-game sweep at the first round-robin of the UAAP varsity basketball tournament at the Araneta Coliseum.

"My team did a very nice thrashed a solid assault. A big shot for a small guy," said coach Jerdy Arespacochaga after the Eagles surpassed their best record for a start in 6 July 2004.

Nine days ago, it was also a Rondo triple, with 43.5 seconds left, that lifted Ateneo over Adamson.

Mario Fabito, the University of the Philippines Kinabi's easiest in six game slide by repeating fellow cadet-member National University 69-58.

Despite the loss, NU stayed at sole second with a 5-2 record while UP finished with the consolation 0-7 slate at the end of the round.

The Lions 7 Rondo shot 17 points in the first half, including 13 from beyond the arc, to give Ateneo a 14-point cushion at halftime. But Ateneo and Soriano and Dennis Miranda provided over to FEU rally, slicing Ateneo's advantage to 55-54, less than two minutes remaining in the third quarter.

A 3-0 Rondo fouled early in the fourth quarter on the Toros back up. 58-57. The Katipunan now again retained the lead, 62-60, but a jumper by Soriano tied the count, 2:30 remaining.

Ateneo's way handed the Eagles a 65-62 edge, but a tip-in by RJ Rizada at the other end sent overtime the margin to a point, 65-64.

Miranda helped Chris Tiu on the next play and the sophomore point guard calmly sank his two free throws, 7.9 seconds left, for the final tally.

The Monsters blasted the Bulldogs early on, leading by as much as 24 points, 59-35, midway in the third quarter. Ateneo Tim Alhambra led UP with 11 points.

In women's play, Ateneo also powered the Lady Tamaraws past the Lady Eagles in overtime, 65-58. Both teams joined the Lady Maroons in second place with 2-1 records.

ATENEO'S Paolo Rizada (between Santos, FEU's top gun... action with video

9-hour ordeal for Filipino Olympic bets

ATHENS... Organizers of the 28th Olympic Games are doing everything to make the coming Games the best ever, but the first batch of Filipino athletes and officials here thought the Greeks have to work harder to achieve their goal.

The Greeks can't fault the 10,500 sports athletes and officials who checked in at the Olympic Village last night for being pessimistic after what they had gone through to reach this haven.

They had many obstacles. A 16-hour flight from Manila, the Filipinos had to wait almost the whole day before they finally got to their billeting quarters at the Olympic Zone, 40 km E to the Athens city area.

The reason? Chef de mission Steve Hontiveros and fellow officials Carlos Padilla and Go Ch Villanueva met for the hours with Athen's Task Force to iron out the remaining kinks in the participation.

Among others, the meeting touched on the final list of delegates members, lodging at the Olympic Village, access to various sports during the Games and participation in the opening ceremonies.

Accreditation cards of the team members were validated only after the meeting. But when the Filipinos, by now hungry and sleepy and their energy sapped even more by the heat, were about to take the bus to their village quarters, the team handling the quadrant here could not be located by Luis.

It took almost three hours before the team showed up.

Those who [illegible] during Olympics, particularly the last one in Sydney, long billeting procedures [illegible] and [illegible] requirements are one of the IO's toughest.

No doubt the Greeks are offering good quarters and good food. In fact, the 39-man RP delegation has been given a two-story apartment with eight two-bed rooms plus four more rooms in to achieve apartment. But the host have yet to be rented out since other Olympics athletes' names like the organization of venues, distribution of tickets and handling of transportation needs by teams from 201 countries.

The three-ahead will truly be crucial for the Greeks. The Games will open on Aug. 13 and end on the 29th. Opening day falls on Friday the 13th, which almost everybody believes spells bad luck.

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3 rookies reach Athens tired but excited

MUNOZ—Chief Master Tommy Chua, Junnie Figueroa and Arbor Dionisio reposed delight and excitement as they arrived here Saturday carrying together with senior officials of the Philippine team for the 2004 Olympic Games on Aug. 13-29.

Tracked after just back on six to substitutes. While in closing labor Chua explained and not secretary yet because the fights have not started." said 18-year-old Figueroa as she hurried her baggage check in after a 10-hour trip from Manila, including a one-hour stopover in Bangkok.

"How to go (Chua is it)," pulled 21-year-old swimmer Chua, who felt as if he and weak up from a dream. "Parang nasa Manyula pa siya kagabi (Friday), nung-in-fact talagang si athletic Olympics ako pupunta. Siguro, pantasado na ako (When we were in Manila, I couldn't believe that I'm going to Athens. How I believe.)"

The 22-year-old Dionisio, a member of the BF men's rugby team that won a gold medal in the Vietnam Southeast Asian Games, said he's just as excited as Chua. But he's also concerned that he "would need to see the range and time some more" because he misses rocks and bars.

Chef de mission Jose Lizondwara led the three rookies and six other officials who completed the first batch of the BF delegation to the multi-event spectacle.

The officials are coaches Ramon Jose Cortez (shooting), Henry Medenilla (archery) and Anthony Canada (weightlifting), equipee team leader Francisco Nieva, administrative officer Carlos Gaston Neto and press attaché Cesar B. Villanueva.

Only 10 athletes will carry the country's colors here. The others are foreign-based swimmers Miguel Molina, Miguel Molina, JenAlyn Pangilinan and James Bernard Walsh, boxers Harry Tabanao, Mateo Dayrit, Ronnie Seta and Christopher Cantal, taekwondo jins Donald Daniel Geisler III, Shin's Automatic Rivera and Mercedes Cortez and track stars Leona Dalmacion Galvez and Eduardo Buenaventura.

The boxers are scheduled to check in at the Athletes' Village Sunday after marshaling their training in Bogaut, France.

Galvez, who is rumored to be long-jumping and Buenaventura, who will see action in the marathon, will arrive Monday just a day ahead of the swimmers who are flying here from the United States.

Geisler, Rivera and Seta will have Manila on Aug. 15, going there 10 more days of training before plunging into competition on Aug. 26.

PBA IN CEBU

All-Star cast shows changing of guards

5 DAYS TO ATHENS

Boxers prime medal hopes in Olympics

THE US Magsaysay Sports Illustrated has tipped a bronze medal finish for Tabanao (right) in the light flyweight class. Below (from left), Seta, Cantal, Payla.

By Ray Lustre

ROMEO Seta was playing another basketball in Puerto Princesa City when the urgent call came. He was being recalled to the Philippine team for the 22nd Asian Boxing Championships in Pakistan after a regular member was struck down by the flu.

Leaving the game in a huff, Seta reported to the coaches who shortened him to fight despite missing about 5kilos during his more than 24 months.

Seta's passion for running, skipping rope and tuning the punching bag while watching Sulfilmo the endurance of boxers have awarded off the fat and kept him in the periphery of the light welter category.

After three days of sharing, the 5-foot-7 Seta then the 64 kg. limit and the rest was a snapshot, learn.

Seta, who is the 2003 Philippine Boxing Association (PBA) champion in the welterweight division, was among those who attended

Santillan still OPBF welterweight king

ORIENTAL and Pacific Boxing Federation welterweight champion Bert "Grizzly Giant" Santillan easily retained his title Saturday with a unanimous decision victory over Japanese challenger Takeshi Watanabe at the Professional Gym in Osaka, Japan.

Santillan proved too much for the 10th ranked Watanabe, displaying his assured skill while fighting under pressure to win comfortably in the scorecard of the three judges. Arvel Pantoja, 118-114, Shunsuke Minamiki, 117-113, and R.T Byung, 117-113.

Philippine welterweight champ Elmer Bolero was not so lucky however, as he lost by majority decision to Japan's Kazunori Takayama, ranked No. 11 by the World Boxing Association, in their ten-rounder 10-round bout.

Santillan, who had regained his regional title by dethroning Hiroaki Watanabe in April, showed his aggressiveness throughout the contest, forcing the resilient Marusawa to concentrate on defense, until Japanese boxing gave the Filipino a beating, according to Japanese boxing guru Ko Kimura, reporting for Nightscores from Nagoya.

The victory improved Santillan's record to 21-1-1 with 11 KOs. He is expected to go up in the rankings of the World Boxing Council, where he is rated No. 8, when the world body releases its ratings next month.

Up next for the Iloilo-born lefty is a clash with compatriot Joselito Sultan, the No. 1 OPBF welterweight contender.

In the undercard, WBA No. 7 Eagilio Gabito figured in a controversial split draw with Japan's No. 9 superflyweight Yuki Morai.

"Gabito deserved a victory" said Kimura.

Japanese Ken Nakajima prevailed by majority decision over Filipino Jhay Ortiz, while another Filipino, Nonito Donaire, was stopped in the sixth round by Jaki Takenoki.

Gabriel Lagumbay

DOUBLE KILL: Santillan (right) pummels Hiroaki Watanabe. The Filipino champ duplicated his win in April with a handy points victory over Marusawa on Saturday.

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'Ninongs' needed to boost RP sports

CLEAN LIVING

Manuel B. Magno

THE GOODBYES sports leaders must not depend on government for sustenance all the time because there are other ways to restore our finish for sports promotion and development. The national sports association, for one, should raise their own money instead of perennially putting the cash-strapped Philippine Sports Commission for help.

"The private sector will sports plays a big role as one "investment of Philippine sports," said former PSC chair and Manila Mayor Mel Lopez as he lauded the support of his hometown goodness in reinvigorating the project "Quest for Olympic Gold."

Launched in 1990 by Lopez and his sportsmen-businessmen friends, "Quest for Olympic Gold" gave handsome cash incentives to 1988 Seoul Games boxing bronze medal winner Leopoldo Serantes and Antonio Gerlola, gold medalist in the demonstration sport of bowling.

In 1996, the project also gave generous cash rewards to boxer Eumenio "Dingdil" Velasco, who won the silver medal in the Atlanta Olympics. Velasco also received some P2 million from the congressman's countryside development funds (CDF) through the initiative of Manila Rep. Lito Lopez.

On the enormous strides of amateur boxing in the Philippines, Mel Lopez credited the hard-fighting boxers and the generous support of sports patrons led by BBC boss Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, a man of action known for his business acumen and love for sports. The other "Quest" supporters are Ferdie Tu of Family Building Mindful, plastics manufacturer William Gotchalian, TV mogul Carlos "Boboy" Silva of Viewtex Enterprises, the Ho-Villaroyo-cos of the Triple V Group of Companies and Basher Gutierrez Products Inc.

Mel Lopez was succeeded by Jun cruz, Monico, as president of the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines. Under their guidance, amateur boxing flourished in the Philippines, with 49ers winning the most number of Olympic medals in amateur years, after Serantes won a bronze medal in the 1988 Seoul Games, Roel Velasco came up with another bronze in Barcelona in 1992 and then Roel's younger brother, Onyok Velasco, created his silver in Atlanta in 1996, duplicating the silver medal of Anthony Villanueva in Tokyo in 1964, when Abay was then headed by the late box czars Eugenio "Dodo" Pagui.

In the years since Olympics, the boxing team, which arrived in the Greek capital ahead of the other Filipino contingents for further training and acclimatization, a contingent of light flyweight Rocky Sabalsot, flyweight Rodito Bayla, lightweight Romeo Brin and middleweight Orlando Cruz, right now, the boxers are in top-top shape, in high spirits and ready to fight. Lopez says, are the team's training at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex and the PSC Training Camp in Baguio City supplied with the coaching staff headed by Joel Velasco.

"The boxers have improved tremendously. They now fight like world class Cubans when it comes to technique, power and durability," said Lopez, who also took exception to reports that government officials and sports leaders are taking advantage of their positions by going abroad at the expense of the taxpayers.

"In all my years as a government and sports official...as a city councilor in 1960, assemblyman and mayor of Manila (from 1986 to 1992), as then president and PSC chair—the government did not spend a single centavo for my foreign trips," Lopez said, stressing that he had shouldered all his travel expenses.

OLYMPIC BOXING ON TV

Olympic boxing used to be the platform sport among American television viewers. Boxing produced past Olympic champions such as Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray Leonard and the Spinks brothers, Michael and Leon, who won gold medals in the 1976 Montreal Games. During those years, Olympic boxing was widely followed and was rating high on TV that we forgot.

For example, during the 1996 Atlanta Games, NBC didn't show boxing during prime time. The bouts were shown only between 12:30 midnight and 2 a.m.

"When we put on boxing, we lose up to 7% percent of the female audience," once said NBC Sports president Dick Ebersol. "If you put on boxing in the middle of the greatest family entertainment is all of sports, you're going to drive people away. Women and children won't stand for it."

Boxing was not relevant on prime time mainly to please the women viewers, after an exhaustive survey showed, made up 51 percent of the adult audience who watched the Olympic Games on TV television. And what do women want? Gymnastics, more than anything.

Football refs course set

THE PHILIPPINE Football Federation will hold its National Referees Course from Aug. 9 to 13 at the Andro Viniol room of The Philippine complex in Pasig City.

Cyril Dollisa, chair of the referees committee, said the seminar, which will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, is open to all top referees in Metro Manila.

The course will cover, among others, test, history in the interpretation of the "Laws of the Game." Expected to grace the seminar are PFF president Johnny Romualdez and NCR Football Association president Ismil Bicalbo.

Sudarso Sun Mig Light Advisers Race Organizers Assure Safety of Participants

[illegible]

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

MOTHER AND CHILD
A four-day-old American flamingo chick peeks out from its mother's feathers on Sunday at the Smithsonian's National Zoo in Washington. July 22. Flamingo parents, which share the responsibilities of raising their young, produce a liquid in their digestive system that nourishes the chicks.

Eminent Australians slam Howard gov't over Iraq war

CANBERRA, Australia—Former defense chiefs and diplomats Sunday condemned Australia's involvement in the Iraq war in what could be a major blow to Prime Minister John Howard's reelection prospects.

The 43 eminent Australians including two former chiefs of defense and three ambassadors issued a scathing public statement accusing the government of deceit and rubber-stamping foreign policies decided by Washington.

"We are concerned that Australia was committed to join the invasion of Iraq on the basis of false assumptions and the deception of the Australian people," the statement said. "Above all, it is wrong and dangerous for our elected representatives to mislead the Australian people."

The statement comes as many commentators predict Howard this week will call for elections to be held Sept. 18. Opinion polls predict the election will be too close to call, but have suggested the Iraq war will be a major issue with up to 75 percent of voters believing the invasion was not justified.

Howard, who hopes for a fourth three-year term as prime minister, denied the government misrepresented intelligence about Iraq's weapons programs and had pressured any agencies into believing a case for war.

"The argument that we took the country to war based on a lie is itself a misrepresentation and I continue to reject it," Howard said in Samoa where he attended a Pacific leaders' forum.

Howard had cited Iraq's weapons of mass destruction—which have never been found—as the main reason for war.

Opposition Labor Party leader Mark Latham promised Country if elected prime minister

"I'm very, very important to ensure on these big questions in the war against terror you are honest with the Australian people and you are getting the policy right ... to make the country more secure, not less secure," he told Australian Broadcasting Corp. "Mr. Howard

[illegible] Australian involvement in the war against terror you are honest with the Australian people and you are getting the policy right ... to make the country more secure, not less secure," he told Australian Broadcasting Corp. "Mr. Howard

has an appalling record."

Latham has also suggested that Australia's involvement in Iraq has raised its profile as a terrorist target. The government rejects the allegation.

Howard's decision to commit 2,000 troops to the Iraq invasion sparked the biggest peace protests in Australia since the Vietnam War.

Australia still has nearly 900 troops in and around Iraq, and their deployment is likely to become a key election issue, with Howard saying they must remain there so long as they are needed and Latham vowing to bring them home by Christmas if he wins power. AP

Iraq invasion 'tremendous gift' to Bin Laden, says CIA analyst

WASHINGTON—The US invasion of Iraq was a "tremendous gift" to Osama bin Laden and a major setback in the struggle against al-Qaeda, according to a CIA terrorism expert who has written a scathing account of the conduct of the US "war on terror."

In an interview with AFP, the author of "Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror," blamed the efforts of successive US governments and the US intelligence community in fighting what he describes as a global Islamist insurgency.

"Anonymous," as he is known, painted a dismal picture of the situation in Iraq, a "very bleak" outlook for Afghanistan and said the current debate about US politics which he claimed are providing a fertile recruiting ground for al-Qaeda in the Muslim world.

A senior CIA analyst, "Anonymous" has been widely identified as the head of the bin Laden unit at the Central Intelligence Agency's Counterterrorist Center from 1996 to 1999. He was allowed to write the book on condition he not reveal his identity.

Published last month with an initial print run of 10,000 copies the provocative attack, which was earned by bin-employee-by-classified material, has climbed to No. 3 on the New York Times list of non-fiction best sellers.

It has gone back to the printers for another 220,000 copies and translations into nearly a dozen languages are planned. They include Arabic, French, Greek, Japanese and Turkish.

"Anonymous," a humble, professorial man in his 50s, is blistering in his criticism of the US decision to invade Iraq and topple Saddam Hussein.

"It's a disaster," he said. "I'm not an expert at all on Saddam—or WMD [weapons of mass destruction]—or Iraq but as it factors into the war against al-Qaeda or al-Qaedaism it was a tremendous gift to Bin Laden.

"It validated so many of the arguments he's made over the past decade," "Anonymous" said, particularly the claim by the Saudi-born al-Qaeda leader "that the West seeks to occupy the Islamic holy places.

"We have the first one, the most important in the Arabian peninsula, we occupy that in three ways," he said in a reference to Saudi Arabia. "We now occupy Iraq, the second holiest place, and the Israelis have Jerusalem, the third."

"The idea that we would invade any country that posed a threat to Israel—that's validated by our actions," he continued. "And bin Laden that we last other control of Arab oil, Iraq has the second greatest reserves in the Arab world.

"So it's been an astounding victory for Osama bin Laden in terms of perception and perception are reality to allies," "Anonymous" said.

He said the situation in Iraq, where more than 900 US soldiers have died, "looks like Afghanistan in the '80s with the Soviets, kind of a resemblance emerged.

"I think you can see already the fighters that are flowing in from Algeria and from Saudi Arabia and from Malaysia and from all other places," he said.

As for Afghanistan, "Anonymous" said: "It's very bleak."

"The insurgency is increasing day by day in small measures," he said. "Eventually we'll be faced with a less-than situation of either increasing our forces dramatically or leaving." AFP

Pakistan bags another top al-Qaida operative

ISLAMABAD—A senior al-Qaida operative who knew Dimitri Ivic Lichri said was linked to assassination attempts on Pakistan's president have been arrested in Dubai and handed over to Islamabad, Pakistani intelligence sources said on Saturday.

Qari Saifullah Akhtar, a leader of the radical Islamic group Harkat ul-Jihad e-Islami, was arrested by authorities in Dubai on Friday after Pakistan had requested his detention, said handed over to Islamabad on Saturday.

The capture was the latest brutality tough in a broadening offensive against Islamist groups in Pakistan that has netted more 20 suspects in recent weeks, including computer engineer Mohammad Naeem Noor Khan and top al-Qaida figure Ahmed Khadhr Ghailani.

One intelligence source said Khan e-mailed al-Qaida commander while in custody as part of a sting by security agencies, but his name appeared in US newspapers, which may have compromised the operation, according to reports.

Ghailani had a multimillion-dollar bounty on his head for his alleged role in the 1998 East African US Embassy bombings.

Information gleaned from Khan led to the arrests of 12 al-Qaida suspects in Pakistan such as this week and the decision by the United States to put New York and Washington on high alert against possible al-Qaida strikes.

British newspapers said that among the 12 arrested was senior al-Qaida figure Abu Faraj al-Libbi in Mardan at Attock, and that he was believed to be planning an attack on Heathrow airport.

In a separate development, Pakistani sources said on Saturday that authorities had arrested Amjad Farooqi, the head of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen group linked to an insurgency against Indian rule in Kashmir, the Afghan Taliban and al-Qaida.

Musharraf will be seen as a weakling to either leaders of banned radical Islamic outfits that have vowed to kill him or a US puppet, Some are in retraction, had severed their links to al-Qaida.

Pakistan's intelligence services used information gleaned from a spate of high-profile arrests of al-Qaida members in recent weeks, including those of Khan and Ghailani, to track down Akhtar, described by a senior as "the operational head of al-Qaida in Pakistan." He was with al-Qaida chief Osama bin Laden and Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar in Afghanistan at the time of the US-led war against the Taliban regime within Iraq in 2001, and fled first to Saudi Arabia and then to United Arab Emirates. Reuters

Experts: US made security blunder in unmasking mole within al-Qaida

LONDON—The revelation that a mole within al-Qaeda was exposed after Washington launched its "orange alert" this month has shocked security experts, who say the timing of the source may have set back the war on terror.

Reuters learned from Pakistani intelligence sources on Friday that computer expert Mohammad Naeem Noor Khan, arrested recently in July, was working under cover to help the authorities track down al-Qaeda militants in Britain and the United States when his name appeared in US newspapers.

"After his capture he admitted being an al-Qaida member and agreed to send e-mails to his contacts," a Pakistani intelligence source told Reuters. "He sent encoded e-mails and received encoded replies. He's a great hacker and even the US agents said he was a computer whiz."

Last Sunday, US officials told reporters that someone held recently in Pakistan was the source of the bulk of the information justifying the alert. The New York Times obtained Khan's name independently, and US officials confirmed it when it appeared in the paper the next morning.

None of those reports mentioned at the time that Khan had been under cover helping the authorities catch al-Qaida suspects, and that his value in that regard was destroyed by making his name public.

A day later, Britain hastily rounded up terrorism suspects, some of whom are believed to have been in contact with Khan while he was undercover. Washington has portrayed those actions as a major success, saying one of the suspects, named Abu Musa al-Hindi or Abu Eissa al-Hindi, was a senior al-Qaida figure.

But British police have acknowledged the raids were carried out in a rush. Suspects were dragged out of shops in daylight and sought in a high speed car chase, instead of the usual procedure of watching them at home in the early morning when they can still be bundled into a car without fuss. Reuters

WORLDBRIEFS

Confusion over hostages

MANILA—The release of seven Filipino truck drivers from Iraq has been delayed, with three separate hostage-taking groups demanding ransom for their employer said on Sunday. Rene Mira, Consul, a spokesperson for Kuwait and Gulf Link Transport, told AFP, "All seven Filipinos are free. But this morning we were close to bringing the seven back home until late Saturday night when it resurfaced a new development and we are now discussing it." AFP

Fake beheading

LOS ANGELES—Benjamin Vanderford, a 23-year-old San Francisco man believed to have been beheaded in Iraq, confirmed Saturday he is alive and well and that he faked the communication to deceive insurgents and the governments of the Internet. An email AFP by telephone that he was a citizen. Vanderford, made the video in the deception attributed to him on a recent months ago. The federal Bureau of Investigation said its agents interviewed Vanderford after he recently returned to the United States, "perpetrating this hoax, and that an investigation was under way into whether any laws were broken. The FBI said Vanderford was not arrested. "It was a political experiment," Vanderford said. "After a couple conversations," with a friend, Michael Moore, I started to show the power of the media and the power of Internet. If you can convince one, then the whole thing becomes true. AFP

US apologizes

TAIPEI—The United States has apologized to Taiwan after the island's defacto ambassador to Washington was fingerprinted and photographed upon arrival in the country, despite his diplomatic status, an official said Saturday. Deputy spokesman David Tu Wei Lee was fingerprinted and photographed at Washington's Dulles International Airport last month even after US officials there to avoid him explained his status, under which he would normally avoid such a process. AFP

Peripatetic Pope

VATICAN CITY—Pope John Paul II makes the 104th foreign visit of his papacy when he flies to the Belgian shrine of Lourdes in the south of France next weekend. It will be his eighth visit to France. So far, his visits have taken in 129 of the world's 191 independent states, many of them more than once. Among the states he significantly did not visit were Russia and China. AFP

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Not the solution

GLOBAL oil prices are at their highest levels in history. Following their lead, we can expect prices of the most basic goods and services to go up, too. Is it therefore time to bring back the Oil Price Stabilization Fund?

The answer is No.

Should the government enact a law curbing the deregulation of the local oil industry, giving itself back the power to determine industry prices?

EDITORIAL

The answer, also, is No.

Many of the arguments raised in favor of greater government involvement in the oil industry are based on the wrong premise: that there is a quick fix to the problem of rising oil prices, and it lies in the hands of the government. Some are based on a misreading of the past: that the OPSF worked in its time, and that the country as a whole was better off. At least one argument—that offered by militant leftists—is based on a fundamental inconsistency: the same groups that want less government in our lives want more of it in oil, to ensure lower prices.

But the analytical consensus in the oil industry is bleak: We should expect oil prices to remain high in the next 12 to 18 months. The power struggle between Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's government and the Russian oil giant Yukos (which produces 1.6 million barrels per day) is only the most recent uncertainty to unsettle the world's oil business.

The Yukos factor adds anywhere from a dollar to two dollars to the price of oil per barrel. The so-called terror premium, however, adds at least five times as much to the unit price. Attacks on the Saudi oil infrastructure, which started in May with a bombing that killed five expatriate workers, have not affected either production or distribution in the world's largest oil producer, but the fear of an imminent disastrous disruption is growing.

"We estimate that the fear factor adds as much as $30 per barrel to the price of oil," says Jan Burkhard, director of Cambridge Energy Research Associates in Boston, Massachusetts.

World demand for oil has risen sharply, driven in large part by China's gas-guzzling economic engine. But new pipelines to other parts of the world, mainly in the former Soviet Union, won't be ready to start pumping for a year or so. War in Iraq, political uncertainty in Venezuela, and unrest in Nigeria have helped tighten supply. That leaves Saudi Arabia, which accounts for about two-thirds of the spare production capacity of the entire Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. But precisely because the world depends on the Saudis to make up for any shortfall in supply, the terrorism factor leaves the oil industry even more vulnerable.

It is in this harsh light that appeals for Malacañang to step in and stop oil price increases have been made.

There is no doubt that the government should help provide what policymakers call a safety net, something to help protect the ordinary consumer from the coming oil shock. The question is: Will subsidizing oil prices provide the right kind of safety net?

The OPSF was essentially a subsidy arrangement. When oil prices rose above the pre-determined level, the oil firms charged the government for the difference. In the short term, the consumer benefited, because the "stabilization" fund absorbed the increase. But in the long term, the public suffered, because the government ended up paying billions of pesos in subsidies, using taxpayer money.

This is an obligation that the government cannot assume again. It cannot do so for a practical reason: It is already bleeding under the strain of a P300-billion deficit and a trillion-peso debt overhang. And it cannot do so for a policy reason: The market remains the best way to determine prices; economic experience both here and abroad confirms that government regulation incurs hidden costs, which are inevitably passed on to the public. By and large, citizens as consumers are better off when the state leaves the market to do its work.

But what the market's invisible hand raises up short, the long arm of the government must take up the slack. In the present instance, it can cushion the blow by reducing the tax load borne by petroleum products; it can prevent a recurrence by ramping up Malampaya production and sourcing more oil from producers outside the Middle East; it can implement a no-nonsense, hard-saving campaign. None of these are similar measures are a quick fix, but then again, there is no such thing.

Coco diesel as renewable source of fuel

THE CONTINUED rise in the price of crude oil in the world market and the declining exchange rate of the peso to the dollar are hitting the economy and the pockets of consumers with a double whammy. The former, the anything with either 'oil' or in the name of the law of supply and demand and of world market forces. But we can do something about our dependence on imported oil. We can lessen our dependence on it.

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

We have other natural resources that we can convert into energy. We are, in fact, already doing this with hydroelectric, geothermal, natural gas and—to a much lesser extent—solar and wind power. We almost had nuclear power plants but that was thrown away in favor of a phony shortcut for political reasons. And now we are paying $120,000 every single day in interest payments for a loan used to construct the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant.

Now President Macapagal-Arroyo says that she is mobilized: plans will be announced later a number gas power plants, using gas from Malampaya in Palawan, but it would need another $600 million to develop, which is enough to build seven power plants.

That is the trouble with big power plants—they cost too much money—money that an almost bankrupt country like us cannot afford. For example, we have the huge Leyte Geothermal Power Plant, which is generating electricity but also provides steam for irrigation and drinking. Its steam wells have started years ago but have so far stopped because the money for the project ran short.

However, we have plentiful supply of alternative energy that would not run us into such a big tab. We have the mighty wind energy which can produce a heck of cost material that is to abandon and dump that because no longer profitable to harvest them. Harnessing them would cost more than the income they would earn from selling electricity.

I am referring to oil—coconut oil.

Coconut oil is so cheap in the world market that farmers are cutting down their coconut trees and selling them as raw lumber rather than waiting for the nuts to grow.

Because of the world scare over cholesterol, in which coconut oil is exposed to be rich, consumers turned to other vegetable oils like canola. They're also the demand for coconut oil and its price plummeted and coconut farmers are living down misery. If the demand for coconut oil does not rise soon, the Philippines would also lose its economic-second plantations as farmers continue to chop down their coconut trees for some lumber to earn some money.

The irony increase in the price of crude oil—because of the spread of oil-producing countries—could be a blessing in disguise for the Philippines. Cane diesel can serve for petroleum diesel or coconut oil. It can replace diesel fuel, which is refined from crude oil. Coconut diesel has been proven to be cleaner, burning and better than diesel derived from crude, in price is now competitive with the diesel fuel. As the price of crude rise, that of the more diesel will eventually become cheaper.

In fact, with the price of crude oil is increasing. The price may become up and down along with changes in supply and demand, but the trend has always been upward, since the crude was considered the oil companies in their countries produce something that is finite. Members of Petroleum Exporting Countries, the world's oil cartel.

But crude oil is an exhaustible resource. There will come when the underground deposits of crude oil will run out, and then the least-expensive way landing it over the world with their oil will have to other countries to source left except drawn sand and sunlight. Then they will have to rely on imported countries like the Philippines to keep cane diesel for fuel.

And that is the beauty of cane diesel...the supply is inexhaustible. We are lying in our coconut plantations in the, there will be a supply in the future that our countries producing countries can form their own oil-producing cartels to the present members of Opec when they are doing to us now. That would be poetic justice.

If the present crude oil-producing countries have any foresight, they should find coconut diesel a competitor—like the Philippines' lawyer by selling us crude oil at discounted rates. When the reserves of nuts comes, we will remember their generosity and will throw our coco diesel also at discounted rates.

But before expanding our vigor and planting revenge, we should first lessen our dependence on crude oil by propagating the production and use of cane diesel. I am surprised that our government is not doing this despite the present oil crisis. Aside from putting up a billboard advertising cane diesel at least of in traffic in Quezon City, the Philippine Coconut Administration (Philcoa) has not done anything much to inform the public about it. For many years, the Philcoa has done little else but entertain industry officials who have invaded itself. It should be one of the do-nothing government agencies that the President should abolish.

I am surprised that the Department of Energy, the technical institute of Science and Technology and the National Science Development Board have not done anything much to inform the public about it. For many years, the Philcoa has done little else but entertain industry officials who have invaded itself. It should be one of the do-nothing government agencies that the President should abolish.

I am surprised that the Department of Energy, the technical institute of Science and Technology and the National Science Development Board have not done anything much to inform the public about cane diesel. I am also surprised that the President did not emphasize this during her speech last Friday Aug. 6, before the Manila Overseas Press Club when she announced her plans to address the energy crisis.

We should stop the primitive manner of consumer news. Instead of ranting chemicalness, we should plant more.

The best thing about coco diesel is that we don't need to import any equipment for its production. The current farmers themselves can produce it; thus they will be immediately and directly benefited by it.

Families

Conrado de Quiros

THERE'S THE RUB

EIGHT years ago, we had a (teenager) valley person in the 9220 (airport) pay-up. He and his wife and their daughter lived in our office. There was a small room in the back that they used as bedroom. They helped in the upkeep of the place in exchange for room and board.

Our (teenager) son, was in his mid-20s, while his wife, Ging, was in her early 20s. When we hired her, they already had a 2-year-old daughter, Jem. Not long after the hiring of (teenager), they had another kid, a boy. So it turned out Ging was pregnant at the time they came to us. When their boy was born, the women in our office took time to explain to them the wonders of feeding time: children to them one another of feeding time: children to them one another of feeding time: children to them one another

Mercy missions can be done here

69 it RADIO programs licensed by Cecilia Alvarez-Manalastas, Inc. Bonjour Sun!) of the Television Educational Development Authority discussed how the national budget got it cut last week. 23 percent goes to debt service (a major item is the huge payment for the Bataan nuclear plant fiasco), 25 percent to personal services (mostly salaries), 20 percent to the National Internal Revenue Allotments for local government—for a total of 88 percent. That remaining 12 percent goes to operating and capital expenditures, such as the countless schools, hospitals, bridges, roads, etc.

That presentation drew a response from Sen. Aklan Bonoan, who noted that Briones thinks on the 88 percent before the allegations made by the Iloilo chief himself, the latter's bank and "other schemes" to get money in government coffers (up to 30 to 40 percent of the budget). He also argued that the 88 percent spent on debt service, salaries and NIA are "practically graft-free" because there are no contracts involved to "implement them." He noted that the remaining 12 percent (the part of DBM's budget of P990 billion, P123 billion) of the allotment for expenditures could be lost to corruption.

Are we convinced that while "as much mistaken emphasis" is being given on the P84 billion, the corruption on the revenue side, "which is more than offsetting" is completely being overlooked.

* * *

Actually, and this what's dun the govern, mean is P168 billion in revenues; if it pertains of that is not collected because of corruption, that would be considered a loss of revenues, that equivalent to P168 billion. Therefore, imposed means of the Tasaday"—even makes it more intriguing.

In 1971, a band of farmers on "Mount Apo" vain, former dentist) one discovered deep in what was the Cotabato jungle. Headed by Manuel Elizalde Jr., the farmers "discovered" themselves, the Tasaday people, and the setting person in the setting time. Reported also spotted rich kid with a movie screenplay, who squandered fortunes on booze and women, Elizalde was a favorite subject for some of the fairest faired faces of Hollywood and Manila Mafiosa.

Soon after, the dentist's came out. As incredible as the media that dubbed upon around his presence, the Tasaday story soon came to be doubted as a complete and fiction meant to add credit to the Marcos propaganda machine. Even the Philippine Constabulary, which was in charge of the area, was skeptical of Elizalde when the Marcos couple narrated how their Senate days within less than two months after the discovery.

But just as the time started to rise... thanks to the Cold War and the fall of the Marcos regime—and the grand cover of the National Geographic—Elizalde declared the climate in all visitors of the 45,000 acre Tasaday Reserve. It was only after twelve years into the post-Edsa era did the Tasaday resurface, and with it the untold tales of misery, personality and greed. The Tasaday became the "anthropological find of the century" became the "greatest hoax of the century."

The controversies debates and accusations over the anonymity or various international anthropologists and scholars who have been involved in the question. What is truly a hoax?

Is there a need to answer that question today? Absolutely. So in the sense of it all is a group of very poor people who, as Bonifacio put it, "have been trafficked by those beyond their control." Their existence is finally put closure to this protracted controversy?

Elizalde's objective scenario is filled with interesting tales emerging from investigations due to

Political Tidbits

Belinda Olivares-Cabacungan

as to tax collection, which could reach as high as 30 billion to P185 billion.

* * *

Arroyo also noted that Sen. Ralph Recto has been talking about risk in budget hearings, but fiscal, economic and monetary officials have not been putting attention. But this time, he said, both chambers of Congress are prepared to talk about the revenue problems in the government's tax collection efforts, before discussing any new proposal.

In other words, what the lawmakers are asking is the immediate deployment to go after those who are doing everything it could to raise the revenue collection flow and to clean up the bureaus of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs, before Congress starts acting on the proposed tax measures.

* * *

The entire Filipino nation is grateful to the surgical team at Manila Doctors Hospital, headed by Dr. Jaime Gonzalez, for its free surgical operation of conjoined Filipino twins Gian and Clarence Aguirre. The multi-month operation was done by a Filipino doctor named Policy Lopez, a co-resident of Scottish in the US, in collaboration with the Philippine General Hospital, Makati Medical Center and Cardinal Santos Hospital. The surgical operation for the twins was brought to the attention of the MG Foundation, which made the arrangements and coordination between the Aguirres and US Mobile that came to their rescue.

* * *

Last Saturday, however, I wrote that Filipino doctors have the expertise to separate Siamese twins. The PGH team alone, which has a pool of about 27 doctors, has actually operated on 11 cases of conjoined twins, nine of which were quite successful, including one case involving twins conjoined on one side of their heads. A Medical Center Manila team, led by Dr. Eduardo Abesamis, did a similar feat, also on conjoined twins attached at the heads, just like the Gian twins, and most of them survived, be it seen in his room and well.

* * *

But while we have the medical expertise here, the problem is funding; the doctors have to scrounge around for funds—sponsors on Filipino business twins, and from reports, our local doctors have had to operate under far less ideal conditions. PGH's department of surgery chair Dr. Josefina Jimenez said that such an operation at PGH could cost only P200,000, which is nothing compared with the P2 million estimated cost for the Aguirre operation and rehabilitation. (Does not include 10 doctors' fees which are being donated). But even that amount (P200,000), the PGH just doesn't have. This is indeed a shame.

The Aguirre twins' plight might soon expire other conjoined patients needing emergency operations. To repeat the Aguirre's case in the US Gian Gian, whereby all expenses were shouldered by doctors and hospitals, would probably not be that easy to come by once again. But perhaps some regulations could pool expertise of their CHP to raise funds for PGH conjoined operations by such expertise and to upgrade much-needed hospital facilities.

* * *

Dr. Camilla Panganiban wrote to correct the impression that she was the leader of the PGH team that operated on the Bacoy Siamese twins, who were conjoined on a side of their heads. She said there were four surgeons in the team: Dr. Victor Reyes, Dr. Faustino Dimayuga and herself, neurosurgeons; and Dr. Flores, the trauma, plastic and reconstructive surgeons, and Dr. Ruiz, pediatric surgeon. Dimayuga and Dr. Ong, the anesthesiologists. Dr. Ong, Dr. Panganiban also noted that the separation of twins joined at the spine was also a combined team effort of at least eight specialists.

Final word on the Tasaday?

Kris-Crossing Mindanao

Antonio J. Montalban II

"INVENTED Eden" is the apt title of a book released only last year by the American publishing house Basic Books, and which is the subject for today's column—The Elusive, Tattered Garment of the Tasaday"—even makes it more intriguing.

In 1971, a band of farmers on "Mount Apo" vain, former dentist) one discovered deep in what was the Cotabato jungle. Headed by Manuel Elizalde Jr., the farmers "discovered" themselves, the Tasaday people, and the setting person in the setting time. Reported also spotted rich kid with a movie screenplay, who squandered fortunes on booze and women, Elizalde was a favorite subject for some of the fairest faired faces of Hollywood and Manila Mafiosa.

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Elizalde's objective scenario is filled with interesting tales emerging from investigations due to

'Four gives'

The Long View

Manuel L. Quezon III

I'd embarrass me to admit that I haggle with my dentist. It doesn't seem to bother him, however. In fact, my friend who recommended him did so because, among other things, the dentist is amenable to payment by installments. Still, it seems silly to me to haggle with a medical professional, and yet that seems to be par for the course for so many people. So, I haggle.

My dentist doesn't have a fancy practice, and he's not the most up-to-date dentist in the world, but he's very good and he's affordable. And, in addition, I enjoy speaking English with him, because he was trained and taken up nursing. I have come to like him as a dentist and extremely good at what he does, possessing the kindly manner that only Filipino medical practitioners seem to have (and which I suppose is why I go to him even though he doesn't). He succinctly does well for himself, has he is not, by any means, a millionaire, unlike so many orthodontists. The frustrations in his income, it seems to me, are a reflection of the limitations of the society in which he has chosen to work.

The miracle is he hasn't decided to chuck it and go off in search of work abroad. A doctor friend nursing for the government recently told me a colleague of his, a nephrologist (kidney specialist), has resigned and taken up nursing. I have also heard of a friend in New York who, after 10 years in America, not only has two houses—no thirty but also is investing in property here in Metro, and I assume, for the life of me, we love anyone can be, giving a person decision-making a name overseas.

What's you see the many middle-class villages in Metro Manila, what seems to be the story unfolding about them is how the houses in them represent a dead end. Those villages and the houses in them were built by the generation of 1970s post-professionals who worked from the 1950s

to the 1970s, and who, by their own hard work, were able to secure everything from a house, some land, education for the children and to the more humble to after decades of working for a living. The success of those generations may be measured by their ability to keep their children above the bids line in the 1980s and in the 2000s and in the early 1990s, who, even if they are their parents, can never hold the sort of life their parents did.

The persistent complaint of people my age is that it is virtually impossible on a salary to buy a car, get a mortgage-driven apartment or a small house, and generally achieve the things that parents did. Increasingly those who can, juggle jobs to increase their paychecks.

The dead-end nature of things, as shown by the problems of the middle class, is best seen in the problems of the middle class, at least seen in that class. I've often heard it said that if you become a doctor or a dentist in the 1960s or 1970s, you'd be assured of eventually having a house, a car and enough income to send your children through college. But aside from specialists getting up to scale of expensive specialization because no one can afford dentist anymore (as they might as well become nurses abroad), you have an ever-increasing number of young doctors barely able to keep themselves and their families financially afloat, while they complete their specialization. One wonders in one of the final hospitals dentist she worked she told me he retired less in a month than a newspaper editor in profession not highly remunerated to begin with) does.

To live in a society where the profession, which once gained respect and assured their practitioners advancement in life, are now increasingly irrelevant, is a crushing, horrifying thing. The message to the young people who would be professionals is: be a doctor, and be looked at by your peers as someone devoid of success—never mind the increasingly expensive education, which leaves you mired in debt for your parents deprived of their savings)—only to discover that you do not have the means to afford the care you were trained to provide, this must leave cynicism and despair. It is a no-win situation: no wonder so many opt out and try their luck elsewhere.

As a former Philippines, I wouldn't have so long, go into my doctor. My other patients wouldn't have to go family arrange payments in vets, there, four installments for basic dental work. His electronic patients wouldn't have to endure longer treatment because they would be assured of getting their braces tightened when they're invited to their payments, insurance would pay for it, either the private kind or that provided by the state. The majority of the patients of my dentist cannot afford insurance, and the owners of them do not see the state to provide their insurance which to their needs professionals to insure. In the real Philippines, government is irrelevant, because the only way to get by is to have a heart-to-heart talk with a service provider and haggle for "four gives."

Comments to mvon@inq.net.ph

Corrections box

EARLY a week passes without a reader writing me to call my attention to errors in grammar, names, dates and other information that appear in the newspaper's pages.

I enjoy getting these letters. It shows the newspaper has a corps of readers in the Philippines and elsewhere in the world who go through the editorial contents of the issues in with eagle eyes. I do not consider them fault-finders who have a "gotcha" attitude.

Readers' Advocate

Raul J. Bulaklaksa

I look at these letters as—in the words of one of those readers—"a small contribution in helping make the Inquirer the best and most credible newspaper in this country." I make it a point to acknowledge receipt of these letters to show appreciation for the efforts they took in writing and sending them, especially if they were sent by post mail.

Last year, a reader's high school student from Roxas District, Quezon City wrote to me practically three times a week to point out mistakes in the use of punctuation marks, hyphens and adverbs by the reporters. They were handwritten and consisted of not less than three pages.

I successively complete the time and effort that went into her letters. I love to measure the number that she, or whoever the author is, got in the lastest post office mailer, went through to buy stamps and have the letter mailed to the newspaper.

When one of her letters was published in the Letters section, she wrote to me to tell that some of her former students called her up or told her that the grammar point she raised in that letter reminded them of their school days. Her unknown reasons, she put me scared her correspondence with me after four months, and I have not heard from her since. I would be happy to reach base with her again.

Errors

I immediately forward to the publisher all the letters I receive regarding errors in names, dates, places and what-have-you in news reports and other articles. Upon verification of the mistake, the proper correction is made in the "Corrections" box that appears on Page 4 of the newspaper whichever the food arrives. Thereafter, whether corrections are raised in other letters remained those of their earlier days, the unknown reasons, are put per-caused her correspondence with me after four months, and I have not heard from her since. I would be happy to reach base with her again.

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Why tax the rich first

IN ADDRESSING the budget deficit, the government may opt to hit the rich taxpayers' net personal disposable income...or money left after providing for basic and personal outlays—but not the poor taxpayers' meager earnings which are not even enough for their most basic needs: three square meals a day, clothing, shelter, education and medical services. This is simply true good-old vacation system which was based on the ability to pay and on the benefits received. With their wealth, the rich benefit and enjoy more in civilized society so they have to pay taxes for their exercised greater benefit and enjoyment, by shouldering higher taxes (which they can afford to pay) that will help the government maintain the established order.

However, the government, which badly needs higher revenues on account of the ballooning budget deficit, would now rather have civilized taxpayers—through new tax on owning and increased VAT on basic luxury and essential goods—that will hardly affect the luxurious lifestyle of the rich, but worsen the already miserable life of the poor.

There are now countries with top graduated personal income tax rates of 60 percent to 90 percent, but our government has not expressed any intention to create what it has gifted to rich individuals: a dictator reduction in their top income tax rate—applied to taxable net business income over P500,000—from 60 percent as of December 1985 to 32 percent by January 2000. Hence, the government should demonstrate its profound concern for the poor by first easing its tax increase—by adhering to the ability-to-pay principle of taxation by way of lessening fully or partially the top tax rate for the rich even on an emergency and temporary basis.

—RAMÓN U. DICHOSO,
San Miguel, Bulacan,
manueeeee@yahoo.com

If only Bush Jr. reads Bush Sr.

IN HIS MEMOIRS, "A World Transformed," written five years ago, George Bush Sr. wrote the following to explain why he didn't go after Saddam Hussein in the end of the Gulf War.

"Trying to eliminate Saddam...would have removed irreplaceable human and political costs. Apprehending him was probably impossible... We would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq... There was no viable 'exit strategy' we could see, rendering another of our principles. Furthermore, we had been consistently trying to set a pattern for handling aggression in the post-Cold War world. Going in and occupying Iraq, thus unilaterally extending the United Nations' mandate, would have destroyed the precedent of international support to aggression that we hoped to reestablish. Had we gone the invasion route, the unity we'd have could conceivably still be an unsupportable burden."

If only his son could read.

—REY D. ARTILLA
rartilla@cyberbay.com

GMA's policy to save life

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal Arroyo declared in her State of the Nation Address that "[my] moral policy to save life," and that "[t]he government has no policy to sacrifice life."

If she wants to be true to her statement that the government will not sacrifice life, then she must overrule the Department of Health policy directing P83 million of its unexpended fund in the Congressional Initiative to promote the so-called natural family planning method. She must also overrule the Bureau of Food and Drugs' decision to delist Postinor, an effective and safe emergency contraceptive pill as declared by the World Health Organization. Postinor, that manner seems to the final exegetical consumption prevent the need for abortion.

GMA has also stated her desire to address moral justice. To be true to this pronouncement, she must support the repeal of the 1932 Revised Penal Code provision penalizing women who undergo abortion and those assisting them. An example of a social justice policy is the repeal of Presidential Decree 772 on anti-squealing that was seen as an injustice to the urban poor and not a solution to the problem of squealing.

Estimates show that one of every 100,000 live births, 240 Filipino women die. And about 80,000 women end up hospitalized and many others die due to complications from clandestine and unsafe abortion. Unsafe abortion and its complications have been the number-three leading cause of hospital discharge from 1994-99.

Another day must not be a long time to continue denying women's access to the full range of contraceptives and to safe medical abortion. GMA will not be running for re-election in 2010. There is no reason for courting the Catholic Church hierarchy and risking on its restrictive position.

If GMA wants our valid judicial pronouncing the reproductive right of Filipino women—it will do so tomorrow, she will not just save an Angelo de la Cruz but thousands of Filipino women.

—CLARA REX A. PADILLA,
Samantha Gilmore, Fatlandkights, New York Shanchez, 34 Mendoza St., Cubao, Quezon City

LETTERS

We have rich taxpayers with very big disposable income. Many of them perceived because of the Filipino consumers who patronized their businesses. If so, they are indebted to the people. Therefore, they have no misgivings if they refuse to give out of their affluence. After all, even if they just make such millions in taxes—pesky cash to them—the rich can still afford such toys that painted bottles, Bentley cars, fabulous jewels and other luxuries that many Filipinos cannot even dream of.

—RAMÓN U. DICHOSO,
San Miguel, Bulacan,
manueeeee@yahoo.com

Student discounts, anyone?

As everybody knows, the prices of basic commodities and needs are going up. Just like everybody else, we, students, are affected by the rising prices. Personally, I am affected by the increase in transportation rates because almost every day I have to take the bus from Southwood City Pilliet in Vito Cruz, Manila. To my knowledge, I'm supposed to get a student discount. But always the bus drivers say that their fare rate, mine has decreased. Same to give discounts only to senior citizens but not to students.

One time, my dad and I rode on the bus together. When my dad was about to pay the fare, he said "Isang Pedro Gil, mahal isang Mercure. Yung sa Ilaw Cruz ay student (then pointed to me), 'di ba may discount yun?" But the bus driver refused to give me a discount. My dad got mad and acted to file a complaint.

The same thing happened when my friend and I took the bus going home. My friend's money was not enough for her P22 fare. But if the dyeepney had given her a discount, her P20 could have sufficed. Since she was still billed for P22, I had to lend her some money.

I think that giving student discounts to minibuses is part of the law as the transportation should abide by it. When we are getting higher and higher, but that doesn't mean that our allowances automatically follow suit.

—KATLEYA JEZIAH M. SANTIAGO,
St. Scholastica's College,
kat_sweetness@hotmail.com

A challenge to Senator Jamby

"JAMBY fights joints over war" by Rob Cameron [PDI, 7/28/04] is a disservice, simple of documenting a less important issue to catch some of the unrelated campaign. The drama was present so far of, before. The following day, another "true issue" by Marlon Ramos "Marines may survives attack shame" was on the PDI pages. I guess, the media have nothing to say day I have to take the bus from Southwood (Las Piñas) to Vito Cruz, Manila. To my knowledge, I'm supposed to get a student discount. But always the bus drivers say that their fare rate, mine has decreased. Same to give discounts only to senior citizens but not to students.

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—KATLEYA JEZIAH M. SANTIAGO,
St. Scholastica's College,
kat_sweetness@hotmail.com

Abandoned road project no more — DPWH

In CONNECTION with the article titled "Abandoned road repair" by Marieva Wenceslao Gloria (PDI, 7/12/04), the Department of Public Works and Highways would like to inform interested readers, particularly those in the concerned engineering district, that the road project in question is on E. Rodriguez Avenue, which is classified as city road. Therefore, it is the Quezon City Engineer's Office that is implementing the project.

The project involves the asphalt overlay/improvement of concrete pavements on the outer lanes of the four-lane road from Mc Arthur to Tandang Sora (Tomorrowland) and Del Monte Streets. It is under contract by SE Orbino Construction.

DPWH Quezon City District Engineer Oscar Lastimoso said that he had informed Quezon City engineer Joselito Cabungcal about the abandoned road repair project and about the unattended deep excavations which have filled up with rainwater and therefore a hazard to motorists. Cabungcal explained that the contractor stopped work due to a change in the work order but that it has resumed construction since July 19.

—ANDREW B. PANLILIO,
officer in charge,
Public Information Division,
Department of Public Works and Highways, Manila

Concepcion's 'judicial interference'

CONGRESSMAN and Oil Price Watch chair Raul Concepcion is out of line in denouncing what he calls "judicial interference" of the Court of Appeals in overturning the Meralco rate hike of May 30, 2003. [PDI, 8/3/04]

Obviously, Concepcion's knowledge of power issues is inversely proportional to his "expertise" in oil prices, although even that has lately been put to doubt by the President's spokesperson.

The CA decision is in search is consistent with the landmark Supreme Court decision upholding the P50-billion refund to Meralco customers. This is the consumers' spirit—where only prudent investments and expenditures are recoverable after audit—apparently forgotten by the Energy Regulatory Commission, abandoned by the Department of Energy and of which Concepcion is obviously clueless.

Investors in power are scared away because of excessive rate recoveries, i.e., high power rates, charged by Meralco.

Investors in the power industry on the other hand, are scared away by the huge influence of Meralco with its mega-franchise covering 60 percent of the total market. With the Supreme Court upholding generation and distribution, how can the new power players hope to compete? If Concepcion is a true consumer advocate, I challenge him to join us in the fight to reverse the unjust management of Meralco and break up the Meralco mega-franchise. Incidentally, smaller franchises charge far lower rates than Meralco, where bigness certainly does not benefit the consumer.

As for the Commission on Audit's superiors, the law and a long line of SEC decisions recognize COA's role as the audit arm of the [illegible]. COA acquitted itself well in its 1998 audit of Meralco, which led to the P50 billion refund last year.

Given the alarming trend of the ERC and the recent decisions of the courts, we are inclined to accept Concepcion's suggestion to abolish the ERC and move power rates to the courts. After all, it was the high court that reinforced the concept of thorough and exhaustive public hearings to determine reasonable rates; the CA followed that ruling in reversing the ERC on the rate-unbundling issue.

Finally, Concepcion should realize that the principal reason Meralco's books are subject to public scrutiny is that every consumer Meralco spends—and more—is passed on and recovered from the consumers. Meralco is inside regulatory bonus of a legislative franchise. If all of this is Lopez money competing for patronage to accuses and competitive markets, then obviously Meralco could do with that money as they please.

We hope Concepcion will be able to see his way through the power issues. Otherwise, to might [illegible] serve consumers by keeping his wonderful eye on oil prices.

—FELI L. KALAW,
president,
National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms,
Unit 11 Arnao Seafront Gardens,
Reina Boulevard, Pasay City

If you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Maniquis Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to fax 897-4703, 897-4704, or e-mail readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph

We like all letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address, for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Across the NATION

General Santos radioman shot

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—A reporter of radio station GMA Super Radyo dxMB here is in critical condition after he was shot by one of the bodyguards of featherweight boxing champion Manny Pacquiao.

Jonathan Abayon had a single bullet wound on the right cheek from a .45 caliber pistol and attending physicians revealed that he had a 30/70 chance of surviving.

In an press crime, the victim had been transferred to the hospital's intensive care unit after going through a major operation.

Christopher Ouano, dxMB station manager, told the local press that Abayon was on board a private vehicle when he was shot by the suspect identified as a certain William Saez.

Ouano added whoever shot the suspect had **just some from a drinking session in Pacquiao's residence** in the upscale Labangal here **where the shooting took place.**

Quoting eyewitness Ricky Lopez, driver of the **private,** Ouano said **the victim and the suspect** traded jokes prior to the incident.

"Apparently, the suspect got mad resulting to it the shooting incident," Ouano said.

The suspect fled after the incident and was being hunted by policemen.

Report here have condemned the incident. Bernard Sobolfski / Philippine News Agency reporter chief of Gandaogan, said it was a serious blow to the efforts of the media sector **to free purveyors of truth.**

He appealed to authorities to look deeper into the increasing number of killings and violence against journalists.

He challenged the local police to find all means to apprehend the suspect and file charges in court.

"I hope, this would not be another case of unsolved violence against newsmen," Sobolfski lamented.

Supt. Willie Bangate, city police director, assured the local media that the police would not stop until the suspect was arrested.

Bangate said the police already have leads as to the whereabouts of the suspect and was optimistic he would be arrested soon.

Abayon was the second newsman shot here this year.

The first was Ily Binayo, station manager and program host of dxRB Radyo Bida, who was shot to death by unidentified assailants on duty on July 17.

The police had already identified the principal suspects in the Binayo slay and had filed murder charges against them.

The cases, however, had yet to issue warrants of arrest against the Binayo slay suspects.

— Agaton Jarcia, PDI Mindanao Bureau

PANAGPOG FESTIVAL
Sangaring Ki, from the Aeta tribe aims his arrow in the archery competition, one of the events of the Panagpog 2004 festivities in the Island Garden City of Samal.

SBMA notice of violation against US vessel stays

By Norbert Joaquin
PDI Central Luzon Desk

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT—The head of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority's ecology department said the SBMA did not withdraw the notice of violation issued to an American vessel that dumped human waste into Subic Bay here on July 27.

The historical cause despite pronouncements from the Presidential Commission on the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA Com) that the findings of the SBMA on the human waste dumping by the USS Russell were "inconclusive."

In a letter that she sent to several newspapers last week, Analiza de la Llana, SBMA ecology department head, said the SBMA might not have withdrawn its complaint against the erring vessel contrary to the statements by the VFA Com.

De la Llana issued a notice of violation and slapped a ₱10,000 fine on USS Russell after receiving an incident report from the SBMA seaport department that the vessel discharged human wastes into Subic waters.

Jerome Montero, port operations division head, also said a fact report that two US Navy personnel assisted the seaport investigating team that took pictures of the discharge and confiscated the diskette on which the photos were stored.

Montero later told this reporter in a phone interview that the human waste might just have been brought in by tide from the Kalaklan River in Olongapo City.

On Thursday last week, VFA Com Executive Director Zosimo Jesus Paredes II met with staff members of the SBMA seaport and ecology departments.

After the meeting, Paredes issued a statement saying the VFA Com sent a team, which he headed, to investigate the alleged human waste discharge by USS Russell.

The statement said "it could not be ascertained if the wastes came from the USS Russell or whether it was washed down the shore due to the inclement weather and rain/showers/heavy seas/rough tides/strong winds caused by the rain of the US vessel."

Paredes also claimed that "further investigation and research conducted that military ships do not dispose of solid human waste; that, because everyone is processed, wasted and turned into fulgo (water being disposed of, and that with **incombustor residence and lime, the SBMA** thought it just to withdraw the complaint."

Paredes said that the letter was **added to the pile** of wastes stored was not confirmed but was **"surrendered" by seaport authorities.**

But in a letter sent by De la Llana to several **newspapers in reaction to a report** that in the house last Friday, she hinted that the SBMA and the VFA Com might not have actually conducted any investigation in connection and that the SBMA might not have withdrawn its complaint against the US vessel.

De la Llana was reacting to a statement by shipping agent, Jose Batolito, who was quoted in the papers as saying that the SBMA ecology department "ignored the process when it went over the heads of higher officials" in citing the USS Russell for violation of Philippine environmental laws.

De la Llana said the issuance of a notice of violation to the USS Russell "in fact, set in motion the due process whereby the supposed violators could explain why they should not be penalized."

"But why did USS Russell and Mr. Batolito's firm choose not to receive the citation and assume the whole process of investigation? Was there any re-investigation that nullified **the original report from the seaport depart**ment and thus effectively terminated the due process (that) began with the serving of the notice of violation?" De la Llana asked.

Big industries now turn to Harbour Centre Port

HCPTI gets 90% of international non-containerized market

Harbour Centre's expansive working apron and back up area after efficient and orchestrated operations, while its close working distance from international vessels to container yards operations.

Michael Richard Tiglao, Harbour Centre Port

Big companies from practically all types of industries are now moving in Harbour Centre Port Inc. (HCPTI) as their discharging point.

In fact, for the months of June and July 2004 alone, 90% of international non-containerized vessels entering Manila and the Philippines have docked in Harbour Centre Port. Their cargoes include steel, logs, lumber, rice, fertilizer, gypsum, silica, frozen fishes, wheat, grains, sugar, soya, also has a much scale and a much holding area that can fit in 500 trucks at a time.

With the expansive working and back up area, cargoes are properly stored and accounted for — no misplaced or lost shipments and absolutely zero pilferage!

Each operation is carefully planned to ensure the highest level of efficiency. "We carefully map out every operation. We believe this is key to higher level of productivities," explained Michael Ramirez, CEO of Harbour Centre Port. "This allows us to control inappropriate unloading procedures even before actual operations begin. It helps us accomplish things much faster and provide bigger savings to our clients."

Unloading and dispatch of cargoes are supervised by Harbour Center's experienced personnel trained in providing honest and straightforward services. No red tape and corruption guaranteed!

Furthermore, the port boasts of a tight security system. Vehicles entering and leaving the port are carefully monitored. Security personnel are strategically positioned all over the port to guard against theft, pilferage and other suspicious activities.

Complementing its superior facilities are ample port equipment, including an 88-ton heavy-lift capacity Gottwald Harbour Mobile crane, as well as 11, 12, 16, 8, 5 and 5-ton forklifts, among other equipment. At present, Harbour Center has a total of 63 fully-owned forklifts with capacities ranging from 1 to 15 tons.

Customers also enjoy additional savings through a rebate program based on the frequency and volume of their shipments. "Our commitment is to see the standard in shipping by giving our clients the highest level of service and efficiency while giving them the best value for their money," adds Ramirez.

HARBOUR CENTRE
The Future of Shipping

Comelec disqualifies winning mayor in Bohol

By Chito A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

TAGBILARAN CITY—The winner of the May 2004 mayoral race in Buenavista, Bohol was stripped of her victory after the Commission on Elections declared she was not qualified to run for the post.

The Comelec resolution came 74 days after the May 10 elections and 23 days after Dumpig-Pepito assumed the position recognized by then vice-term Mayor Sixto Ouano.

Pepito was proclaimed winner over Bano by 1,548 votes in the municipal section of Buenavista, around 31 km from Tagbilaran City.

The ruling did not, however, say who would take over as town mayor—whether or not it was Ouano or the winning vice mayor.

Ouano filed the petition to deny due course to Pepito's candidacy last Jan. 7 or two days after the deadline in the filing of certificates for candidacies for local positions.

He claimed that Pepito stated that she had been a resident of the Philippines before the May 10 polls for six years and four months when she was an American citizen since the 1970s and her renunciation was in the Philippines was by court decree only.

Pepito applied for repatriation and was able to take her oath of allegiance before Immigration official Mirasol Bernardo only on Oct. 29, 2003, Bano added.

Lawyer Jr. Virginia Odtohan, Bohol provincial election supervisor (PES), earlier recommended the cancellation of Pepito's certificate of candidacy, noting that "all the evidences" presented by both petitioner and respondent showed that Pepito was an American citizen.

Under Comelec procedures, the PES can only investigate but not decide on such cases.

To be a registered voter under section 117 of the Omnibus Election Code and constitutional mandate, Atty. Odtohan said, one must have resided in the Philippines for one year and in the locality where he proposes to vote for at least six months immediately prior to the election.

Regarding the qualifications of a local elective official, Odtohan said an elective official must be a Filipino citizen, a registered voter in the local government unit where he intends to be elected, and "a resident for at least one year immediately preceding the day of the election."

"Mathematically, Pepito could only be considered a resident of Buenavista for more than seven months only immediately preceding the May 10, 2004 elections reckoned from the time she took her oath of allegiance from Oct. 29, 2003," the Comelec resolution pointed out.

The five-page resolution noted that Pepito is "short of the one-year residency requirement mandated by Article V of the Constitution and of the Local Government Code."

"Let us just wait for the right time. We have always abided by the Law," Bano told the forum in Cebuano when reached for comment.

Bano, 46, claimed he lost because he did not campaign actively, expecting the Comelec ruling earlier but realizing up on a "fair" recount when Pepito's disqualification failed to come.

Pepito was not available for comment but told a radio station here that she still has to receive a copy of the resolution.

Electric coops raise power rates without public consultations

NAGA CITY—Exactly a week after directors of a local electric cooperative here joined militant groups in a protest during President Macapagal-Arroyo's State of the Nation address urging her to stop the expected big power rate increase, the Commission for Electric Cooperatives (Ilocos) announced last week it would charge its consumers higher for their power consumption.

Sally Perez, Camcenor II spokesperson and concerned Iriga-based Ateneo Department manager, said the electric cooperative would now charge its consumers P2.2802 per kilowatt-hour for the generation charge, with the 12.67-centavo increase starting with the July billing.

She said the increase would be added to the generating cost being charged by the consumers.

Perez said there was no need for public hearings to implement the power rate increase.

She said the increase was authorized by the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) because of the increase in the prices of fuel and the depreciation of the value of peso against the US dollar.

She added that the ERC ordered electric cooperatives to implement the increase on a staggered basis.

Cabiao Cameron II, Perez said other electric cooperatives had already implemented the increase since June.

Camcenor II directors led by Lito Del Rosario hogged the public's attention when the income reported their opposition to the increase just because militant groups joined militant groups in protest, although many consumers dismissed it as a mere gimmick.

Leyte

In Ormoc City, the Southern Leyte Provincial Development Council (SDC) will ask the ERC to explain it's approval of the increase in electricity rates by the local electric cooperative without conducting a public hearing here.

A consumers group appointed to Gov. Rosette Lerias and Ormoc City Mayor Eutimio Mercado to find ways to stop the Southern Leyte Electric Cooperative (Soleco) from increasing its rates.

Soleco increased its electricity as much as 38 percent starting last April, a move that drew criticism from the Consumers Association of Southern Leyte, led by Agustin Arcadio Sr., as it was done without holding a public hearing.

The Solecs, which services about 80,000 electric consumers in the province, has increased its rates to P5.480 per kWh from P4.75 per kWh starting April.

Leyte and she learned that a public hearing was held in Manila. IBC published the notice in a national newspaper that its circulated and a Metro Manila-based tabloid.

But the governor said this was questionable since Southern Leyteños did not even know about it.

But she said she would want to hear first the side of ERC before contemplating any legal action.

"There's something wrong why they conducted the public hearing in Manila and published the public hearing not here in Southern Leyte," Lerias said.

No bikes

Solecs manager Ernesto Lamoste said they did not petition for an increase, adding that the increase was the effect of unbundling of rates, which the Solecs board of directors had approved by the ERC in April.

"We are just passing the blame to the ERC. We are just following their order," Lamoste said responding to Governor Lerias' statement that the "The Same as follows the order or else we will be penalized."

He maintained that invitations to a public hearing had been sent to all mayors in the province.

Lamoste's statement however contradicted his pronouncement in last month's ERC meeting where he appealed for understanding why they had to increase their rates. He had then pointed out that Solecs had not asked for an increase for the last 28 years and that the increase was prompted by high operational costs and big payment losses.

Alan Dujan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau and Jael Arnaiz, PDI Visayas Bureau

ROUNDUP

'Panelt' fest in Tagaytay

TAGAYTAY CITY—
This city will host the second panelt festival on Aug. 19-20 as part of the city fiesta celebrations honoring its patron saint, San Jacinto de Polonia.
Romeo Albert, city secretary, said the city government would provide 1,000 kilograms of rice (locally made vinegar) for the panelt-cooking contests during the festival. So, city has 40 cauldrons to serve eating public. Proceeds from the festival, he said, will be used for the fiesta activities.
Tanmiester Calleo, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SIR employees suspended

ILAGAN, Isabela—Two employees of the Bureau of Internal Revenue in Isabela were suspended for 90 days, while other BIR officials are facing charges for allegedly extorting money from taxpayers.
Suspended were assistant revenue district officer Leonardo Pagalaran, revenue district officer, and the suspension of Lorenta Ragano, administrative officer, and security guard, collection officer, was imposed by BIR officials in Metro Manila to stop them from influencing the investigation of their cases. Ragano and Lesa were arrested in an entrapment operation in September last year while allegedly receiving P4,000 in the municipal town's businessman. Supt. Rolando Lazaro Jr., Isabela police intelligence and investigation chief, said they exhausted the BIR officials after businessman Manolo Acosta complained that they were asking money in exchange for the non-reporting of the businessman's supposed tax delinquencies.
Filemon Flores Jr., PDI North-ern Luzon Bureau

2 men gunned down

BANGUED, Abra—Two men were gunned down in a billiard hall in Barangay Tubo here Tuesday night. Police identified the victims as Sinnan Bulan, 40, a driver, and Noel Tebado, 28, a student. Reports said the victims succumbed to bullet wounds in their heads. According to witnesses, a lone gunman, armed with a .45 caliber, attacked the victims at about 8:40 p.m.
Arthur Eric Parades, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

New Tineg mayor

BANGUED, Abra—The Commission on Elections has declared Isidro Cristobal the new mayor of Tineg town. Comelec Bise Est Antonio Nilasco held a radio interview here that Cristobal got ten more votes than the incumbent Mayor Antonio Mendoza in Wednesday's election. Nilasco declared that Cristobal got 2,811 votes, while Mendoza got 2,801 votes.
Arthur Eric Parades, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Drug suspect shot

SAN JUAN, Batangas—One of the top Illegal drug suspects in the province was murdered and wounded on Thursday after he tried to escape from policemen in Barangay Lower Taysan. Supt. Felix Castillo, provincial police director, identified the suspect as Rodolfo Tanay, 38. Castillo said Tanay opened fire to evade against the policemen's car after he suspected responding officers. Report to said a policeman was forced to shoot Tanay when he ignored the to warning shots and tried to flee.
Melvin Gascon, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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CEBU PACIFIC

C. Luzon, Bicol groups decry low wage hikes

LABOR groups in Central Luzon and Bicol regions have assailed the low pay increases granted by the regional wage boards last week.

The Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board last week approved a P15-increase in cost of living allowance (Cola) for Central Luzon workers, and P12 for Bicol workers.

The Manggagawa para sa Kalayaan ng Bayan (Makabayan) and the Workers Alliance in Region 3 (War-3) found the amount too small, saying this was not enough to cover the diminished value of the P224 daily minimum wage in the region implemented two years ago.

According to the groups, the wage value diminished by 50 to 70 percent.

Josefino Torres, regional Department of Labor and Employment director, said the P15 Cola will be "integrated into the basic wage after (a year)."

"This is a pathetic attempt of the wage board and the Macapagal-Arroyo administration to appease workers long clamoring for humane wages," said Rolando Ilag, War-3 chair.

War-3, an affiliate of the Kilusang Mayo Uno, has demanded a P125 across-the-board increase.

Emily Fajardo, Makabayan regional chair, said the additional allowance would "not have a cumulative effect on workers."

This was so because the amount would not add up to the overtime pay and 13th month pay, Fajardo said.

"It really does not give a substantial relief to workers who get so little for so many hours of works," she said.

Ilag said the amount was not enough to cover the increase in transportation fare.

"Even the government pegged the food basket in the region at P490 a day. At the current level of the minimum wage and this additional Cola, there's hardly any food on the workers' meal tables," he said.

Fajardo also doubted the compliance of companies and the will of the labor department to enforce the additional Cola.

In Legazpi City, different labor groups from the region also said the P12-increase was not enough to meet the high costs of commodities nowadays.

During a protest-rally on Aug. 3 in front of the Department of Labor and Employment office in Legazpi, Frank Cariño, Kilusang Mayo Uno-Camarines Sur spokesperson, said they were insulted by the meager salary increase that RTWPB was about to implement.

"The P12-wage hike is not even within the 10 percent of our clamor, which is P125 a day," Cariño said. KMU said the average daily cost of living is about P510 per day, far beyond the around-P180 minimum wage in the region. They also pointed out the series of price increases in basic commodities.

The P12 wage hike in Bicol would take effect 15 days after the publication of the wage order in a newspaper with regional circulation. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk and Joyce Mejillano, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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Take the cut, family planning expert tells Pinoy macho men

Photograph(s)

avid official a big family gives his profession, says ex-mayoress Inclining the oldest child of Sen. Juan Flavier, a former health secretary.

Tell him the cutest results; the 44-year-old "family" described to have his reactionary two years ago. But compared to Lucia, he only has two children, now aged 17 and 14.

"I wished to do it because my wife Patricia had had two high-risk pregnancies and because we want to allot more time and attention on our child," said the young physician, a former director of the Philippine Open Population, which advocates family planning.

He said he was operated on by a friend in November 2002, simply "on the usual conference table in my office." Like Flavier, he recalled heading with the operated using from the time was around five hours.

Not compromised

Both men swear their sexual lives were never ruined.

"You are my that is is still working perfectly well," said Flavier, sounding like his sixty-old man, even inviting the interviewer to call up his wife, too, for "validation."

"I will get into my wife's secrets but now it's because I don't want to get enough," said Dimitri's head.

In the world of Boy Dogis this kind of arguments rarely had such-sounding basic "out" for being risk and feebleness in a little boy's, take of his supposed sexual prowess get chased with his neighborhood drinking buddies.

Indeed, telling Filipino men to be having a vasectomy is always deeply involves dispelling many prevalent "misconceptions," said Dr. Ricardo Gonzales, medical adviser to this female doctor of the Philippine Open Population, which advocates family planning.

"It's not castration," he stressed, because the man would keep his sex drive would still have an erection and ejaculate, and might even "perform better" because he was no longer worried about impregnating his spouse.

The procedure involves cutting the cube where sperm pass to and does not affect the testes that produce the sex hormone. "The bloated sperm is just reabsorbed by the body; semen is still secreted but minus the sperm," he said.

Window period

But how come some men still get pregnant even after undergoing such a procedure? Gonzales cited two causes: Either she was already conceiving without her knowing it before the husband underwent the procedure or they had unprotected sex during the post-operative "window period" wherein the remaining sperm which lay outside the sealed section were released.

This window period means the first three months after the operation or about the time it takes for a man to have 20 ejaculations outside "normal sex." Couples are advised to use condoms if they would have unprotected sex during the period, he added.

But Gonzales, flaunting a "thirty-ego" by convincing Pinoy males to dare to take the cut.

Based on his experience, "the wrong way to do it is to blame the husband by having him [undergo] the procedure, but having his libido in check," said Senator Flavier, who previously served for 15 years as director of the government-run Jose Fabella Hospital in Manila.

"Instead, he must be made to realize that by the loss of his sons, it's high time he helped and took over after the other methods had failed," he said. An engaging public speaker, Gonzales has been promoting family planning way before he was tapped to push the three-year IEC project, which was launched in August 2002.

Where the bars are

He recalled that the Pedelta hospital achieved the "highest acceptance rate" for vasectomy operations during his watch, partly because "we have a reimagy called 'Where the Boys Are,' wherein we approach the male while he waits outside the dentistry room and his wife is in labor."

It's one of those "true" stories from that prompt typical Filipino husbands go to a health facility.

"And you know how some wives are when in labor. You hear them cursing and swearing to the husbands for getting them pregnant," he chuckled, he said, smiling.

Flavier also observed: "To my ladies, many men seemed easier to convince if they would have other male friends doing it, preferably on the same day and in the same clinic. For us Filipinos, it becomes more of a social-bonding or barkan company."

He said it reminded him of how pubescent boys, especially in remote rural barrios that lacked clinics, preferred to get circumcised on the same time on a barkada, lining themselves up before the village barber in some secluded spot.

Gonzales explained that the latest vasectomy ground are no longer involved cutting open the skin of the scrotum but just having a "punctured" using a special forceps. An operation would normally cost up to P5,000, including doctor's fees, he said.

Covered by Philhealth

And not everyone seems to be aware yet that vasectomy, along with tubal ligation, has been covered by Philhealth. The government's health insurance arm, for the last two years, according to Gonzales.

He said the MSD welcomed the debates over the need to address the country's alarming population growth, trapped by the "pro-life" lobby of the Catholic Church on the government to adopt a "two-child policy."

The population question aside, wives can instead second if using contraceptive methods, he noted. "Now we never objected that the time it will be a pain-reduction a man."

As for Boy Dogis, the father of seven may not be the perfect person key for his chosen family planning method. But he has about at least urging his friends—also readers and construction workers—to follow him to the clinic while their libidos are still of manageable size.

RP starts first of 7 lifetimes of healing environment wounds

Photograph(s)

Ronald Reagan, Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago and Estrada Z. Bautista are preparing to sue their incompetent lawyers, technique to detoxify mining wastes at the mine. They will have to get legal representation.

The exciting part of the meeting devoted attention to the use of coconut wastes and water-based seeds and not imported chemicals, as we reported. (How Gil Buenaventura kept his job)

Another volunteer environmentalist is Dr. Remy Bernardo of ECOS International Corp., who wanted to detoxify mining wastes using not microorganisms which we have in abundance in garbage.

Armando will use a machine of the Department of Science and Technology to demonstrate the simple technique. Next week, Bernardo will be in Davao, where gold miners are poisoned every minute. Remedies promised to give jobless miners and displaced people.

At every interested one, with the exception of Senator Defensor, count water and microorganisms, the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines can now have a neglected label.

Fishing

Philippine waters can be assigned by foreign poachers and local fishing companies which are destructive methods, such as the massive use (unsupported) of dynamite (right) fishnets, nets and what have you.

Fortunately, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines' environment committee chair, Tony Oposa, is also an environmentalist par-excel.

Tony is now "policing" the waters of Cebu province, which are infested with human shacks who discharge the life. As a result, the municipal fishers are able to catch only one kilo of fish daily.

Tony succeeded in having the courts in Cebu issue three alleged big fish (which are all Filipinos) and is finishing up the cases. Only final hearings of the three are still left to go.

We are watching on the sentencing of UBO 17, which bans fishing within 15 km of the coast.

He is supporting the education campaign of environment secretary, like Teodoro Locsin, on sustainable fishing.

We salute Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun and Undersecretary Antonio Quisumbing, Jesse de Rueda and Mel Ignacio, for the data and analysis about the problem environment.

The DENR promised to give away seedlings to their employees in the 15 regions of the country. And to develop the bamboo industry.

Conclusion

All problems have solutions. As a matter of fact, before the problem sets, the solution was already there.

Still, like Secretary Bernardo, we believe that more things are wrought by power than this world ever dreamed of.

Isn't life cute?

KINGDOM OF A HIGHER WORLD

A FATHER'S MEANINGFUL DEATH

Recollections of an OFW's son (a message to OFWs and the nation)

[Name] minimize the importance to do [the] best to be better against [the] wrong [and to serve others] — Dr. De Guzman

Things have come in an absurd and when real heroism is unidentified because most of what catches our national attention is political show. Character quietly forged in the storms of life is generally disregarded, while political expediency rules the day. When ethics declines so to those national characters, we have to wonder if we are still on the right track and we cannot sway in fear. Take the case of Angelo dela Cruz and the issues related to the pull-out of our troops from Iraq. It is no surprise then that we have shamefully become the butt of all jokes worldwide.

The present crisis of character in our society is far deeper than any national scandal. For this reason, *the search for a remedy needs to rise above current controversies* since personal and responsibility. The latter being a product of hard-to-find individual moral character that when found, ought to be embraced and nurtured above in order to be worthy hand over time. *In a country like ours that has a weak sense of history, a damaged culture and a lot of lessons yet to be learned, it is a breath of fresh air to read about a true-to-life story of the meaningful death of a father, and more so the meaningful life of a son.*

The following is what we received the situation of Angelo dela Cruz led Police Chief Inspector Rey Rascala Noble (Camp Crame, Quezon City) to email the death of his father, an OFW who died in Iraq. His police officer's email, sent at a crucial time in our country, points us to real heroism, i.e., character. This email was sent prior to the homecoming of Angelo dela Cruz. It contains a beauty seemingly coming from a higher perspective.

Dated July 31, 2004, his email goes ...

> We were told that he died on September 11, 1983 in an unknown hospital in Damrah but reasons we did not know. It was during the Iran-Iraq war. We were told that my father died of neglect since the priority of rescue then were the wounded Iraqi soldiers. My father was a carpenter who went to Iraq in March of 1983. I was in second year high school then. My mommy left to visit us before but to accept the hard reality of life and be content with bringing to dead body back to Manila.
>
> That would have been impossible, too, if not for an uncle, then an Air Force soldier, who helped us all the way. The military helped bring my father's body home. Because of this, I have had a very high regard for the men in uniform. The good will extended to us by the military were a long way.
>
> At 17, without any other means of continuing education, I decided to take the entrance examination at the Philippine Military Academy (PMA). At that time, my mother who was a plain stenographer left my and my three younger brothers, ages 13, 11 and 9. The PMA was my only hope for a better future. I got in. Life was tough inside the academy, but I told myself that I would rather die than go home.
>
> *My father's death served as my challenge and inspiration.* I have since encouraging his sisters to study hard was promotion as well in our house. Long after my father was gone, his dreams continued to live on in his family, i.e., a dream that would have stayed on or ended with me, the eldest son.
>
> The death of my father played a very important *dose of a promising future* for me. However, I think God that I was not blinded by hatred against the government nor against anyone else. *It was not as if we favored the closed door by looking at another door that opened for me.* I entered the PMA in 1988 and graduated in 1992.
>
> Today I serve as Police Chief Inspector at the Philippine National Police (PNP). My mother is still a humble storekeeper in our hometown in Pangasinan province, and my three brothers are all employed in the government.
>
> I sympathize with the family of Angelo dela Cruz. I know the pain of losing somebody you depend on. Angelo dela Cruz's family must be feeling that all doors closing on them now. If they would only look closely — how many OFWs have died in Iraq, in the Middle East or in other parts of the globe because they were working to give a better life for their families? Countless and nameless. Most of those are mere statistics now. But Angelo dela Cruz is not. His situation caught the attention of the Filipinos, the Filipino Muslims and the rest of the world.
>
> Death is the destiny of every man, but not everyone is given the privilege of dying meaningfully for his country.
>
> To the relatives of Angelo dela Cruz: If your father dies, he would die fighting hero — a global threat that has united the world to come together and fight evil. *His death could make an impact on the whole world.* That is a privilege and an honor that no amount of money could buy. If he survives, then his problem remains. *There will be surgery for family to endure based so they do not simply depend on him?* The latter is a serious message that we militant users advise.
>
> However, I want to impart a more important message to the other OFW families, especially to the children that are now in school by the blood, sweat and tears of the millions of Angelo dela Cruzes still out there, fighting their way to survive all the threat on their life and family.
>
> *I beg you to study hard, so that if ever you have to work out of the country, you do not have to remain as lowly employees but excellent and respected ones.* Mother, we, are you do not need to go abroad and work away from your family. We can live decent lives in this country. Study hard so that the sacrifices of your parents bear fruit.
>
> *Lastly, to the OFWs all over the world:* Keep on communicating with your children. Compel your children to study hard. Do not give in to their whims, instead, invest in their education.
>
> I hope that through this message, other OFWs and their families will be inspired and challenged.

And let us hope that we hear more of these kinds of courageous stories of character rising above the harsh realities of life. Times of crisis are actually opportunities to search for real heroism. Times of weakness are actually opportuni-

> "Death is the destiny of every man, but not everyone is given the privilege of dying meaningfully for his country."

ties to build inner strength. times of darkness are actually opportunities to make our light shine to guide others.

Buy a person in the streets of Valley Forge, and you have a George Washington. Raise him in abject poverty, and you have an Abraham Lincoln. Strike him down with unbearable paralysis, and he becomes a Franklin D. Roosevelt. Burn him so severely that the doctors say he will never walk again, and you have a Glenn Cunningham, who set the world's one-mile record in 1934. Have him or her born black in a society filled with racial discrimination, and you have a Booker T. Washington, a Martin Anderson, a George Washington Carver, or a Martin Luther King, Jr. Call him a slave, barrier and crucified, and write him off as unbearable, and you have an Albert Einstein.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said: *"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."*

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8 MAMAMUNDO

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7 MAMAMUNDO
8 KING ARTHUR

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2 CATWOMAN
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4 GARFIELD
5 CATWOMAN

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JUVENILE STAKES

Speed Majesty, Lamborghini frolic in mud

By Edwin Villanueva, Contributor

SPEED Majesty made the loudest noise in the Juvenile Colts, while Lamborghini reigned supreme in the Juvenile Fillies at the start of the championship series for 2-year-old gallopers yesterday at the Santa Ana Park.

Proving his previous win was no real, Speed Majesty used his blinding speed from the gates to repeat over the heavily favored Next Hero, a son of 1998 Horse of the Year Derby and Preakness Stakes champion Real Quiet.

"Bigging inone ko na kan yan nalapa ang gamay para sakanin a Real Quiet (I really owe him to the lead right away because Real's the big name) because Real has real speed," said star jockey Jeffrey Zarate, who was also aboard Speed Majesty the first time they humbled Real Scary in the Santa Ana Juvenile on July 11 in the same route to open play.

Speed Majesty sired by Royal Prerogative out of Hidden Lover, finished the 1,400-meter race four lengths away from the Hernan Exequiel-owned Pre Dilemma handled by Jonathan Hernandez. Speed Majesty, who battled and pulled clear in the Wonders Stable last throughout the middle route.

But the Esguerra Stable-bound barked with might as Dilemma appeal powered Lamborghini to a 6-length victory in the fillies' race but was completed into Nina.

"Nakakabat 3500 to ride in maganda," gushed Dilema, the three-time PBA Jockey of the Year said Jo-ly's unmitigated rides with 10 wins.

Speed Majesty, conditioned by Mario de la Paz, and the Jonelito "Nick" Antonio trained Lamborghini, is a thoroughbred daughter of Mr. Senor out of Mistress Royal, both were worth P300,000 courtesy of owners sportsmen Philippine Racing Commission.

Hidden Fantasy wound up third and last in the Juvenile Colts race, which was reduced to three entries early when Tommy Warrior scratched due to a leg injury.

Undisputed, who challenged Lamborghini at the top of the stretch, settled third in the Juvenile Fillies, followed by Jedi, Queen Josephine, Hale and Reign, Pers-Hall's entries and Bonchwald.

Speed Majesty covered the race in 1:30 flat (1:45.0 (1:35.34.38), while Lamborghini negotiated the same distance in 1:32 (1:32.0, 1:31.0).

Eagles tame . . .

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Nutribun revived to feed …

ANGRY Bonavin, 10, a Grade 5 pupil at the Quezon Elementary School in Baguio City, takes a bite of "Nutribun," an offering of a breakfast feeding program of the nongovernment organization Kalagan Watch.

(Continued on page A-3)

students of the Baguio City National High School before they go to their classes.

Next in her inviting routine is hugging pots and ladles to the BCNHS home economics building so she can cook soup to go with the buns. At 7 a.m., she is joined by some friends, and they serve the simple meal to first-year students, who queue eagerly.

Yanes' group is called Kalagan Watch, and the undertaking installed "First Meal Project." The target: underweight public school students who are too poor to improve their condition. "Kalagan" is a kankanaey term for "life."

Skipping breakfast

Yanes told the Inquirer, "Many of these students do not eat breakfast because they do not have the time, as they live very far, or their families just cannot afford to feed them. We want to help them develop the habit of eating breakfast so they can participate more actively in school work."

Ibad Pasaoa, BSF board member and a BC-NHS alumnus, said the project would run for one year. "But the situation is the same in city or public schools in Baguio. This is why we want to expand the project after this."

He said his group focused on high school freshmen for a start because it was at this stage that students faced the most changes in their educational training.

Dr. Jocelyn de Asis, BCNHS doctor, said selection of participants for the feeding program was scientifically thorough a team, to ensure information campaign. Of the 1,394 freshmen, she said, more than 300 were found to be underweight, and from the survey forms, it was also found that most of the subjects belonged to families with six to 10 children.

Ma-to junk food

But a few also came from middle-class families where the parents were professionals—doctors, lawyers and teachers—Dr. Jesa noted. The group declined to rate the program. "Out of embarrassment," she explained. "They did not want to be teased by their classmates for being 'malnourished.' I wish the stigma could be removed. The important thing is for them to eat."

And to sell, of course. Yanes said her group has further enlisted BCNHS' help by banning the sale of junk food in the school canteen. This is where the Nutribun mike comes in.

In the 1970s, Nutribun was a part of the United States' food aid program to the Philippines.

According to the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) of the Department of Science and Technology, the goodwill bread was prepared from soy-fortified wheat flour and distributed to schools and feeding centers. It later versions were made from bulgur wheat and green peas.

Yanes said the FNRI's version contained oil, potato, milk, flour and carrots, and could compare with the original Nutribun in terms of the children's nutritional requirements.

The choice of the donut-shaped bread as a trademark was no accident. Yanes and several IPP colleagues grew up consuming Nutribun in school, too.

"We have sentimental stories about it," she said.

Now, funds for the "First Meal Project" come from BSF members and a few sponsor-friends. The program welcomes donors. Call Frances at (0920) 405-3422. Nutribun-related job searches not required.

ARLENE Aguirre gazes at her son Carl after he was separated from his conjoined twin brother Clarence by the surgical team at The Children's Hospital in Montefiore in New York.

Carl's so handsome…

(From page A1)

the hospital had invested so much (expected to be about $2 million), and his concern as to (turn to page A11)

"But the rest of the room was upbeat," he said. "The most critical part was when we discovered that a part of the boys' brains was fused together, [contradicting] the imaging studies. There was some confusion and unease."

He said the room called in the rooms cardiologist, who stuck to the imaging results. "After an hour and a half of deliberating, we decided to proceed based on what we actually saw."

Lopez, 32-year-old president of the Academy of Filipino Neurosurgeons and chief of the Department of Neurosciences at the Philippine General Hospital, said he was "just lucky" to have participated in what has been widely hailed as a medical milestone.

"Initially, the primary reason that I agreed to join the team was that the patients were Filipinos," he said simply.

For him, the journey to CHAM began in May last year with a call from Goodrich, an old friend.

Dottie Holland Gruss of Children's Chance Connecticut had called CHAM's attention to the Aguirre twins' case after she herself was contacted by Carmen Santiesteban of Philippine Airlines Foundation. Goodrich sought Lopez's help in assessing the case.

"We trained together at the Neurological Institute in Colombia from 1995 to 1996 and have since been in touch," Lopez said.

Goodrich had been to Manila twice, as a matter of fact…in 1995, when Lopez invited him to speak at the opening of the Cresencia Cruz-Gruson at the Philippine Children's Medical Center in Quezon City, and in 1998 for a holiday.

'Nothing's impossible'

The twins were brought to the Mahar Mangahas Center within a month of Goodrich's phone call. It was the first time Lopez saw Carl and Clarence. "My wife CY came and I answered the results," he said.

After the tests, Lopez told Goodrich there was a good chance that the boys could be separated. CHAM agreed to shoulder the cost of surgery, and PAL Foundation offered to fly the twins and their mother to New York.

Goodrich called his friend in Manila once more, inviting him to participate in the surgery. Lopez obtained a license to operate in the state of New York.

In November last year, Lopez was present during the second surgical procedure. And then again in mid-June, he was advised that the fourth and final surgery would take place in late July—which was later moved to the first week of August.

Lopez said he had no second thoughts whatsoever, knowing this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that he should not pass up.

Asked what his greatest learning was from the whole experience, Lopez said it was something that Arlene, Carl and Clarence themselves had "taught" him. "If you keep your faith, nothing is impossible. And that if you give someone a chance, someone up there will look out for you." With a report from AP

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MONDAY, AUGUST 9, 2004
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
B1
BUSINESS

Meralco rate ruling alarms energy firms

By Abigail L. Ho

THE RECENT Court of Appeals ruling on Manila Electric Co.'s unbundled rates has placed the country's investment environment on shaky ground and has given the impression that regulatory decisions in the power sector can always be overturned by the courts.

The Energy Council of the Philippines, an association of local and foreign energy companies, expressed "grave concern" over the possible repercussions of the decision, particularly now when the country was in need of power investor incentives to overcome expected power crises in 2006.

Regulatory stability, the organization said in a statement issued on Friday, was a prime consideration for investors thinking of sinking in hard-earned cash into a sector as capital intensive as the power industry.

"The Court of Appeals decision is a setback because," the ECP said.

The ECP pointed out that the Energy Regulatory Commission was formed precisely to decide on cases and rate applications that were technically and financially unwieldy in the powers sector.

As these decisions required crystallized technical and financial expertise, the group said the ERC was the best body to handle such cases and to issue such decisions.

Also, the fact that the appellate court released its decision to annul and set aside the ERC's approval of Meralco's unbundled rates more than a year after the ERC issued its order gave the impression that the board power source deemed no jurisdiction for purposes.

"That delay inevitably contributes to the growing awareness that decisions of the ERC do not stand on solid ground for they are at times overturned by the courts," the ECP said. "Thus, they cannot serve as the basis for future investments and vital loans from international lenders."

The court's order to have the Commission on audit scrutinize Meralco's books could also affect all previous decisions of the ERC withholding the rates of other distribution utilities and electric cooperatives, the ECP said.

The decision could also cause delays in the approval of future rates unbundling and rate setting applications of power distributors, the group added.

The ECP recommended that if the COA should play a role in some of the ERC's decisions, it should only be in aiding the regulatory body come up with a specific analytical framework on which the approval of rates unbundling or recoveries would be based.

"The ECP feels it is unfortunate that this court decision is made now when power shortages have already hit the Visayas, and more are forecast for Luzon in 2005 and 2006," the group said. "To meet these shortages, it is critical that the distribution utilities are technically and financially healthy and that the economic basis for their continued operations is predictable."

Tighter rules on credit card operations eyed

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas is set to issue new guidelines to tighten up banks' evaluation of credit card clients following the surge in past-due receivables from this consumer lending.

BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes said that while the monetary has recently issued stiff guidelines on the credit operations of banks, there was a need to further boost the regulatory framework to fill in some gaps.

"The banks' credit evaluation appears problematic," Reyes said.

The BSP official noted that rules may have to be drawn up to ensure that banks would conduct a tighter assessment of credit card users' capability to pay.

However, he said there was no need to go to the extent of prescribing a ceiling on credit card exposure as a percentage of banks' portfolio.

"Compared to the total portfolio, banks have a small exposure on credit cards," Reyes said.

The BSP did not want to impose a ceiling on a business segment which had a lot of room for growth, he added.

Based on industry data, credit card penetration rate in the Philippines is estimated at only 30 percent of the population, which means that the remaining 70 percent still had no access to these products.

There are only about four million credit cards issued in the Philippines. Given that the average credit card issuer has at least two different cards, the actual number of outstanding credit cards issued is estimated at only two million.

Nevertheless, credit cards represent lending without collateral and silicon past due ratios have been rising. With the cutthroat competition among institutions issuing credit cards, there is a tendency to be more aggressive in expanding the customer base.

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Borrowings down 5.3% in June

By Michelle V. Ramos

THE GOVERNMENT's net borrowings dipped by 5.2 percent in the first half to PHP 202 billion, from PHP213.05 billion in the same period last year.

Net borrowings is computed as the difference between the amount borrowed by the national government and the payments it made to cover borrowing obligations.

Data from the Department of Finance showed that the bulk of the government's net borrowings, amounting to PHP 239 billion, came from domestic sources, while PHP(37) billion came from foreign sources.

Gross national borrowings sourced from foreign lenders stood at PHP1.29 billion.

This included project and program loans from international financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank, and revenue generated from the issuance of euro-denominated bonds and global bonds.

Money generated from bond issuances abroad was used to finance the national government's own budget requirements for the period and that of the debt-ridden state-owned power firm National Power Corp.

The government paid a total of PHP 437 billion in maturing external obligations in the first half, resulting in net foreign borrowings of PHP(37) billion.

Gross internal borrowings, or those sourced from the issuance of local government securities, reached PHP439.783 billion. The amount included money raised from the auction of treasury bills, treasury bonds, and those from fixed-rate deposits.

The Federal option

MISUARAO is the country's cash cow, which only gets dog food.

This battle cry has been documented by some as most emotional rhetoric of people from Mindanao who seek the attention of national leadership.

However, for Misuarawons who have long suffered the disadvantages of a highly centralized government, this battle cry is rational, logical and justifiable.

And this is a reason why some of those who belong in the disadvantaged sectors in the already disadvantaged island have gone to the extent of calling for the secession of Mindanao from the Philippines.

It may not be the only reason behind Misuarao's woes, and of the other "provinces" for that matter, but certainly the present unitary government structure is one of the main reasons why Metro Manila is favored over the regions in matters of development.

The unitary system is characterized by over-concentration of power and wealth in the national capital and the neglect of the rest of the regions.

Residents of Mindanao and the other provinces go to Manila, but disproportionately little goes back to them.

Since the convention of our democracy does have been somewhat efficient for the national leadership to correct the country's inequitable growth and development due to over-concentration of power in Manila.

Among these efforts is the enactment of the Local Government Code of 1991, which took effect in 1992.

Authored by Misuarawon legislators from Pimentel, the Code set the stage that the territorial and political subdivisions of the state shall enjoy genuine and meaningful local autonomy.

This is to enable them to attain their fullest development as self-reliant communities and make them more effective partners in the attainment of national goals.

Toward this end, the government shall provide for a more responsive and accountable local government structure instituted through a system of decentralization, whereby local government units shall be given more powers, authority, responsibilities and resources.

After some 10 years of implementation, the Code has, to a certain extent, empowered the local government units.

However, the present conditions of the regions outside of Manila show that the landmark legislation, though laudable, has not adequately addressed the problem of inequitable development.

It is an indication that the "victory" made by the Code on the present unitary system is not enough.

To make a substantial improvement in the lives of the Misuarawons, there is a need to effect significant structural changes.

Senator Pimentel himself, who authored the Local Government Code, is one of the strong advocates of a structural change—from the present unitary system to a federal system of government.

He said that the two main reasons for the proposal to federalize the Philippines are to speed up the economic development of the entire nation and, two, to give them the basis for a just and lasting peace in Mindanao.

The adoption of a federal system of government would address the concerns that development efforts are being thwarted by the bias shown by Manila-based bureaucrats in favor of the national capital.

In their own federal states, the state government would be more empowered to plan, fund and implement projects, which can dovetail with their peculiar needs.

A federal system will respond to the long felt demands of local government units and businesses to have their rightful share in the equitable distribution of revenue, right-sizing, streamlining, and downscaling effects of tax, excise coordination and cutback by the national government in the unitary system.

Under the federal system, the power of the federal republic may cover foreign affairs, national defense, federal taxes, customs and migration, trade relations and basic justice.

The primary in matters of development and police, among others, may be assigned to the component states of the federation.

The Constitution may also provide for the concurrent jurisdiction of the federal republic and the component states on certain powers.

Moreover, the adoption of a federal system of government would give the Bangsa Moro a fuller opportunity to promote their own identity, culture and economic development at their own pace, without the need to secede or declare their independence from the republic.

The adoption of the federal system of government needs revision of the Constitution.

With the country's budget deficit, many sectors are wary of attempts to amend or revise the Constitution, fearful of the cost.

At the present would entail substantial cost, this may have the government to further cut its budget for its departments, which may consequently deprive the people of basic services.

For decades, however, Mindanao and the country have been trapped in a cycle of underdevelopment.

If a change in the structure is a probable way to end that cycle, then the cost of amending or revising the Constitution may be a long-delayed investment that the country has to make.

Note: I would like to thank Bro Steven of Bong Mindanao and Lt. Bob Pollard for sharing his thoughts on this subject matter.

Gigi Dagot Alon is a strong advocate for Mindanao; she is vice chair of the Mindanao Commission on Reunification and former Commissioner of the Export Development Council and former chair of the Mindanao Business Council. Email comments to jathan@yahoo.com)

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Group backs Peza move vs Cebu firm

By Ramon N. Dumaliga

THE FEDERATION of Philippine Industries has backed the Philippine Economic Zone Authority's canceling of the registration of a Cebu-based garment firm, which it said was possibly one of the owners of used clothing sold in shops and outdoor markets.

FPI president Jesus Arranza said RA 4653 prohibits the importation of used clothing for commercial purposes.

"Under the law, used clothes and rags may be the property only if these would be used solely for public entertainment or exhibition, they were brought in to be used in making movies, donated or relief goods for disaster by the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

The FPI had earlier said that smuggled used clothing finding their way to ukay-ukay shops all over the country has resulted to the continuing decline in the viability of the local garments industry.

Last week, Old Department of Trade and Industry said Peza had revoked the registration of Pearl City Garments Inc. as an overseas export enterprise by the Manila Export Processing Zone.

It said that Pearl City had misrepresented its

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Thrift banks' NPLs up

By Doris C. Dumlao

THOSE PERSONAL loan of thrift banks rose to 12.55 percent of the sector's total portfolio as of end-April from 12.18 percent the previous month, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported.

Despite the monthly increase, the ratio was still lower by 0.45 percentage point than the 12.8 percent NPL ratio during the same period last year.

The BSP attributed the uptick in the NPL ratio in April to the P5.1 billion in non-performing investment in the NPLs acquired by 35 thrift banks that more than offset the P83.8 million in non-performing exposure in the NPLs of 39 other banks. The remaining 12 banks in the thrift bank sector reported no changes in their NPLs.

The thrift bank sector's NPL ratio reduction of interbank loans likewise narrowed up by 0.09 percentage point to 12.73 percent in April from 12.84 percent in March.

More on RP and Thailand

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

OUR article last week on the Philippines and Thailand as envisaged twelve elected years ago evoked much interest, and understandably so. The way Thailand had pulled away so dramatically from us in recent decades, after having had virtually identical economic standings in the 1960s, provokes very popular exploration of how things could have been for we Filipinos if only we had done the right things—or at least done things the way the Thais did. But years on, it is to our keen validity (my experience and parlor banter has diverged from that of Thailand), it is not as easy to explain away.

Too many Filipinos!

To some, the answer lies in population. Economist Ed Bilson shared with us findings of a just-completed study by Ayanda Bolisetty and Clarence Tabimandra for the Asia-Pacific Policy Center (APPC) that zeroed in on the very different population growth rates between the two countries since the 1970s.

Last week we pointed out that the two countries had identical populations in the 1960s, and how even our population growth rates between 1965 to 1973 were equal, at a little 3.1 percent a year, but Thailand slowed down dramatically from there on, and now are ten million (or 20%) fewer than we are. That's equivalent to the entire population of Abu Dhabi!

The APPC study found that if we had followed the same population growth path as Thailand, Filipinos' average income a year would have been higher by 900 US dollars today. Or, to put it another way, if we had had the same population growth rate as Thailand since 1973, we would have graduated from poverty (at one legislator-light) now whether there should be a two-child policy, whether Filipino workers should avoid pregnancy for five years, or whatever—but by now, the debate should no longer be on whether we should slow down the rapid growth of our population or not, but simply on how we should do it.

Inferior infrastructure

Senator Gloria Arroyo laments: "Thailand now has a subway while we still have to contend with the unpleasant presence. And while they have managed to build a subway in spite of the fact that Bangkok is crisscrossed with canals, we have no excuse at all as to how Metrobus and Novaliches can be ripped from natural floods."

He further writes: "In 1954, Manila hosted the 2nd Asian Games. Bangkok has since hosted the Asian Games four times (1966, 1970, 1978 and 1998). We have not since considered hosting another Asian Games because our facilities are so antiquated and we would not pass the standards required. Just as we struggle to host the first-hosted Asian Games in 2005 (a regional competition) we, only before Thailand's and perhaps from the continental Asian Games), chose to talk of Bangkok making a bid for the 2015 Olympics (Beijing will be host in 2008, as Moscow, Madrid, Paris, London and New York are still slugging it out for 2012). As Thailand heads skyward, the Philippines continues to sink deeper into the pits."

Worst of both worlds

Senator Rubert Gomez had compiled comparative data on Philippine and Thai economic indicators since 1984, particularly inflation and GDP growth rates. He observes: "What is particularly striking in comparing the Philippines and Thailand was that in the '80s, the Philippines was doing significantly better than Thailand in terms of GDP growth (3.3 percent vs. 4.7 percent) and inflation (one 10.1 percent for the Philippines against Thailand's 2.6 percent). But Thailand started closing better than the Philippines beginning to hit back in the decade of the 1990s."

He further writes: "What has not been given any emphasis at all in recent analyses comparing the two countries is the much higher rate of inflation in the Philippines since the 1980s (7.3 vs. 1.4 percent in the '80s, and 14.8 vs. 4.8 percent in the '90s). These raise the fundamental question—what is so different in the orientation of the Philippine economy or society such that it has the worst of both worlds: higher inflation and lower growth compared to many Asian countries?" What, indeed, is wrong with us?

Explaining the gap

Senator Chiltin Wong sees leadership as key: "A leader must lead and pay attention from head to toe. It's like paying attention to our pets when we walk to make sure our feet do not stumble in the newly mowed lawn, but at the same time looking far ahead to reach our destination." Wong adds that President Fidel V. Ramos has been the only President to exercise this quality in recent decades.

To Ariel Pagulo, an OFW working in Abu Dhabi, patriotism is what we lack compared to the Thais. He points: "My Pinoy colleagues here in UAE say they prefer to work in Singapore than in UAE only because the salary is higher. That's the same reason they prefer to work in the Philippines, he observes, "even the young architects and lawyers and bank leaders want improved salaries and shares which can be seen having their eyes[illegible]."

Reacting to my observations that we had been inferior to the Thais in the 1960s, Clifford Peregrina laments: "They put their brains, legs into practice and very likely even improved on them. But us, we probably were just content to bask in our glory as teachers. We just taught. We didn't do."

Abner Labao believes policies make the difference. "Corruption is also a way of life in Thailand," he observes, "and I am led to think that economic development has really nothing to do with the type of government system that you adopt, but rather how the government administrators implement them to promote policies that would benefit the majority of their countrymen." Abner's opinion is admirable. He further writes: "At always, hope is not lost yet... The Philippines, with all its treasures and talented people, can make it in the end."

I wonder (and look to point out) he missed one important thing: that it is only by the grace of God that we still entertain ourselves out of the mess. But we need the answer of the Filipino people from top to bottom to truly acknowledge this so God can do His work for His country.

Comments welcome at chabito@inq7.net

2 bills reimposing franchise tax on telecom firms filed

By Michelle V. Rorra

TWO separate bills reimposing a franchise tax on telecommunication companies have been filed in Congress, pursuing the Arroyo administration's resolve to generate more revenue from the lucrative telecommunications industry.

The bills were filed by Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez and Bicol Rep. Rodolfo Magsino. The congressmen noted that the government has not been collecting enough taxes from telecommunications firms because of loopholes in the value-added tax system currently imposed on them.

The Department of Finance said some telecom firms claimed too much input VAT credits, therefore substantially reducing their VAT liabilities. The DOF said that Globe Telecom, for instance, did not pay VAT in 2003 because the input VAT it declared for the period was higher than its output VAT.

Under the VAT system, taxpayers are allowed to deduct their input VAT credits from the amount of VAT they have to pay the government. Input VAT credits are the amount of VAT included in the cost of services or goods that taxpayers purchase.

Because telecom firms declared huge amounts of input VAT credits and therefore remitted a "low" amount of VAT, the government thought of taxing the telecom sector more. The government initially proposed taxing text messages, but its unpopularity among consumers forced the government to abandon the proposal and instead think of making a franchise tax on telecom firms.

A franchise tax is a tax on a right or privilege acquired by special grant from the public or the legislature. The tax is imposed on firms that use a public franchise, such as telecommunications, water, and electricity services.

Under Magsino's bill, telecommunication companies would be levied a 3-percent franchise tax. Radio and television broadcasting companies, whose gross receipt of the preceding year did not exceed P10 million, would be subject to 1-percent franchise tax. Lastly, electric, gas and water utilities shall be imposed a 2-percent franchise tax.

Under Suarez's bill, telecommunication firms would be slapped a 3.5-percent franchise tax in the first year of implementation, and 5 percent in the succeeding years. Broadcasting firms earning less than P10 million would be subject to 3-percent franchise tax. Electric, gas and water utilities would be required to pay a franchise tax of 2 percent.

Under both bills, broadcasting firms are allowed to make the option of paying VAT instead of franchise tax if they wish so.

The franchise tax was voted under both bills differ from the 1 percent initially proposed by the DOF.

Telecom companies, however, said they wanted to be retained under the VAT system. In a recent consultation meeting on the franchise tax held at the DOF, telecom companies said they were now expected to remit higher VAT payments after many of them have already completed importing their capital equipment requirements.

They explained that the reason they had high input VAT credits was because of their purchases of expensive capital equipment. The VAT they shouldered in buying these equipment were deducted from their total VAT liabilities.

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Money-spinners

P3B spinning outfits and outlets of Hershey-out of-this-chemist, Globe and Ilimary are new flavors of the month by the no-new-top-buy-spend-more-publication.

Globe's consolidated return on average equity (ROE) for the second quarter of the year was an impressive 26 percent. Translated to cash, the Globe wireless business generated P5.64 billion in profit before income tax in the same quarter, and P9.27 billion for the first half of the year.

Smart, on the other hand, racked up double-digit ROE also, at P16.27 billion, one of the PLDT wireless group net operating income of P20.39 billion for the first six months of 2004.

But if you think that these revenue and income figures, you have not seen the ROEs of some of the foreign banks in the country.

Deutsche Bank, for instance, turned in a whopping 51.46 percent ROE for the first quarter of 2004 and 46.66 percent for the second quarter (2Q'04). Citibank may have borrowed from several regions to an eye-popping 52.87 percent in the first quarter of 2004, considering only Globe II and a thirty island in the Manila Bay.

HSBC, one of the oldest foreign banks in the country, has likewise been a steady money machine for its Hong Kong and London principals. For the last quarter, HSBC reported a 21.72 percent ROE, a 9.9 the lowest clip of the 35.41 percent of the previous quarter.

Like the American competition, the Swiss-Sino bank gave the best record quarter performance during the roundabout first three months of 2004, with an ROE of 47.36 percent, largely due to its aggressive treasury operations.

Citibank, which counted the formulas among their valued customers, was a little slower at 19.6 percent ROE during those earlier months. And in the last quarter, Citibank crowded at 6.79 percent, after posting a 20.68 percent ROE in the first three months of 2004.

Strangely, the largest, for all three political controversies and supposed movements, have to a man been caught asleep during the fiba. If months as far as their bank and their treasury operations—perhaps their committed to discomfort and competence to take positions against the beleaguered peso—had been concerned.

Here's the ROE score sheet for the 1st quarter of 2004: Allied, 5.57; Bank of Com, 9.26; Bitreland, 9.52; BOBC, 2.92; EastWest, 8.43; EPCIB, 2.22; and PNB, negative 46.

Even BPI, which had a direct line with the fiba II forces, reclined a stony 6.23 percent for every shareholder peso during that same quarter.

Three years after, the song remains the same. Except for China bank, iBank, BPI, Union Bank and Land Bank, all the local commercial banks posted single-digit ROEs for the second quarter of 2004. A number of them even posted losses. But that is another story.

Son of a gun

MEANWHILE, stock broker owner Carmelo Santiago is facing an estafa complaint from a money changer, and it is all because of his son-in-law Richard Rivera.

According to the criminal complaint filed last week by Raul Bagon of Sabuda Village, Rivera handed Bagon a P4-million check in exchange for dollars that Bagon had transferred to Rivera's bank account sometime during the campaign.

Rivera, a Fernando Poe Jr. supporter, paid with a bounty fresh check and allegedly signed by Santiago, whose daughter Christine is married to him.

To make a long story short, the check bounced and when the money changer's lawyer wrote Santiago, Santiago's lawyer (sweet love this side of the border) wrote back to deny that the breakfaster turner had ever issued the bad check.

GMA charm

IF POE was being driven around in a BMW 760i limousine, chances are the cops would never salute you as your driver zips by cops on the car's color-coded day.

But, then again, you never know that it probably why FLTC/Smart president Napoleon Nazareno bought and screwed on an official-looking "GLOBE" communication plate on his front limousine bumper.

Like the "PBEH" and "FOC TOR ON CALL" signs that have been proliferating in many a private vehicle, the "GLOBE" plate works like a charm.

Just ask those who used to open "BMW" plates.

Heard through the grapevine

DESPITE supposedly serving only as a bookmaker for time-worn cronies of Mayor Jimmy of the Sing-sos Manila Times, entertainer-magnate Eraldo Ramos appears unable to completely shake off the prince's old that has gotten into his system.

Ramos' has lately been making overtures about re-starting a shuttered tabloid, apparently to use it as a defensive, perhaps even offensive, weapon for what until now has been a less-intensive competitive conflict on the multibillion-peso consumer business at the Manila North Harbor. (Email: asalcedo_pdi@yahoo.com or cobedo_pdi@hotmail.com.)

Korean buys out partner in local bank

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE TOMIC Yang group, one of the biggest chaebols or business conglomerates in South Korea, is set to take full control of Orion Savings Bank and list the bank on the Philippine Stock Exchange in two years.

In an interview, BSP Deputy Governor for bank supervision and examination Alberto Reyes said the policy-making Monetary Board has approved the acquisition by Yang Ging Investment Bank of a 100-percent stake in the thrift bank.

Reyes said the full takeover would be done by buying out the 40.5 percent ownership stake held by Filipino partners through Unit Gold Assets Inc. for its undisclosed amount.

Prior it's 100-percent owned by Yang Ging," he said.

Orion Bank, which started operations in November 1997 or during the height of the Asian currency turmoil, has an authorized capital of P1.2 billion and a paid-up capital of P810 million. It focuses on retail banking, such as credit for liquid models and salary loans.

"It has plans to list in the PSE within the next two years when the equity market improves and to provide stock options to employees and officers," Reyes said.

Philippine banking have been liberalized in the last decade to allow 100-percent ownership by foreigners of local banks.

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Century Asia Corporation

PLDT targets 4-year net profit of ₱110B

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE BOARD of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. has set a four-year profit target of P110.6 billion starting 2004, which should raise the company's share price to P1,700 by the end of 2005, according to PLDT's top official.

The PLDT board had set two hurdles for key executives, officers and full-time advisers of the parent firm, subsidiaries and affiliates who would be given a chance to participate in a P6.6-billion, four-year cash incentive program, according to Napoleon Nazareno, president of PLDT and Smart Communications Inc.

The incentive plan starting January 2004 to end 2007 should ensure that key officials would work together to enhance efficiency and increase the bottom line's profitability so it could meet medium-term objectives as well as its long-term goals.

PLDT ended the first half with a record income of P1.2 billion, an amount that exceeded full-year 2003's P11.2 billion profit.

The four-year target, according to Nazareno, would call for a growth of about 15 percent per year.

At this rate, PLDT's net profit should increase to P28.3 billion in 2005, P39.1 billion in 2006 and P53.9 billion in 2007.

This year, the company has revised its income target to P22 billion from about P18 billion following the strong first-semester results.

"If the share price and profit objectives are met, the cost of the plan before taxes, for the four-year period, will be approximately P6.6 billion. The amount represents less than 3 percent of the company's consolidated net profit for the plan period," Nazareno said.

Initially, about 600 people are expected to participate in the program.

PLDT's share price closed at P1,280 last Friday. "The target increase in the base PLDT share price is approximately 33 percent a year compounded for the plan period," the company said. PLDT's share price by the end of 2005 was about P950.

Payment of awards under the plan is contingent upon the achievement of the board-approved target increase in PLDT's common share price by the end of the plan period and PLDT group's cumulative consolidated net profit targets for the plan period," a company statement said.

The incentive would be paid one to a lump sum by 2008. It would be based on an official's annual base compensation, taking into account seniority, responsibility level, performance, tenure and job difficulty.

"Approximately 600 key executives and advisers of the PLDT group are expected to initially participate in the plan. However, persons who join any of the companies within the group within two years from the start of the plan period may be selected to become participants," said the company.

GMA to hold IPO early next year

By Gemma S. Bacino

GMA Network Inc. said it had decided to hold its initial public offering in the first half of 2005, instead of September as earlier scheduled, saying that it would need more time to prepare for the IPO.

GMA president Felipe Gozon said the company would soon choose its underwriter from a list of four foreign and local groups that were earlier selected. The underwriter will help the company draw up the game plan for the sale of the 20-30 percent of the company's shares to the domestic and overseas markets.

He said the company's three major shareholders had agreed that an IPO would be beneficial to the company.

"We are pushing through with the IPO but most likely not this year. We wouldn't do it in early 2005. There is still so much work to be done and we don't want to rush it. We want the [expansion window]," said Gozon in an interview.

He said the fourth quarter was not an ideal time to list in the stock market.

Gozon said the plan was to sell between 20 and 30 percent of GMA to the public to raise about P3 billion.

He based his figures on GMA's enterprise value placed at P20 billion to P30 billion, or nearly double the P15 billion set when Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.'s Metrowide Holdings Inc. had planned to acquire 66.67 percent of the company in 2001 for P9.33 billion.

He said it was about time the existing shareholders finally reap the fruits of their investments, which were made in mid-'70s. The families of Gozon, Duavit and Jimenez own 51 percent each while Gozon has 49 percent.

"I don't expect any problems among the shareholders. I think they will not object to the plan. Anyway all we need is non-friends, and I think we have that already," said the GMA president.

The Gozon group was reported to have plans to sell its stake to PLDT chair Manuel Pangilinan.

Ang Tan Golf Club Shares, Inc.
Corporate Office: [illegible]
Golf Course: [illegible]
Membership Fee: [illegible]
Share Price: [illegible]
Transfer Fee: [illegible]
Annual Dues: [illegible]
For inquiries: [illegible]

TRUST FUND BUILD-UP

CAP gets ₱3.4B in loan offer

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

COLLEGE Assurance Plan Philippines Inc. (CAP) said a prospective foreign investor had offered to invest in the pre-need company at least P3.4 billion in loans.

The amount offered is equivalent to the face value of CAP's Metro Fund Transit or MRT bonds, sources said.

The loan proposal is an alternative to selling the bonds at the premium value of P3.4 billion, which was lower than its 2003 appraised value of almost P7 billion.

To ensure the future educational pre-need claims, CAP was considering selling at least P3.4 billion worth of bonds backed by the cash flow from the MRT 3 project, they said.

A company source did not identify the prospective investor but said it has the terms of a possible memorandum of agreement might be finalized by the end of this month.

The Securities and Exchange Commission earlier said CAP has another month to negotiate with a prospective investor that would likely infuse P300 million in new equity into the company.

The SEC said another investor was waiting to take over the company should CAP fail to find an investor.

SEC Chair Lilia Bautista said a European investment fund had approached the SEC to express its interest in infusing more than $300 million into the pre-need firm. She declined to identify the interested investor.

CAP is currently in talks with a North American fund and an Asian regional fund for possible equity infusion into the company. CAP needs fresh equity to address its trust fund deficit.

CAP said in its presentation to the trust fund regulator due to higher current loss against the lower middle of its trust fund assets.

CAP's trust fund is managed by its trustee banks such as Bank of Commerce, allied Bank, Philippine National Bank, Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co., Bank of the Philippine Islands, Equitibank of the Philippines, and East West Banking Corp.

In its financial report last year, CAP said it had suffered recurring losses from operations amounting to P2.8 billion in 2002 and P400.2 million in 2003. Its negative fund asset level as of FY-2003 was at P3.6-billion as of end-2003.

Ingasco completes plant expansion

INGASCO Inc., a subsidiary of Nippon Sanso Corp. of Japan, said it had completed the second phase of its expansion of its expanded air separation plant, which formed part of the company's expansion program.

The program was undertaken in response to the government's call for companies to provide additional impetus to economic and critical industries in the country.

The company started with the expansion of its nitrogen liquefier plant to fast-lane nitrogen which increased Ingasco's production capacity of liquid nitrogen, oxygen and argon. These gases are used by industries such as semi-conductor and electronics, petrochemical, oil refinery, pharmaceutical, steel and metal.

The expansion of the air separation plant doubled the company's production capacity to almost 300 tons per day.

Ken Ikeda, president and chief executive officer of Ingasco Inc. and founding president of the Philippine Confederation of Industrial Gases Inc. will lead the formal inauguration of and switch-on ceremonies for the new air separation plant on Tuesday at the Sta. Rosa, Laguna facility.

Ingasco's plants are located five easy access to major users in the various technopoles and economic zones in the greater Luzon and Manila area. The cryogenic air separation plant and its gas storing facility are in San Jose, Batangas, and its hydrogen plant is in San Simon, Pampanga.

Nippon Sanso Corp., the parent company, is one of the world's leading manufacturers of industrial gases and related equipment.

VAT on Drilon's steak dinner

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Bernardo C. Gutierrez

PRESIDENT Corazon Aquino, in one of her best decisions, introduced the 5 percent value added tax (VAT) in 1987 to replace and simplify the sales tax and the consumer's tax. Within a few months after he took office in 1992, President Fidel Ramos expanded VAT's scope and raised the rate to 10 percent, which remains to this day.

Now, are we told, President Macapagal-Arroyo plans to scrap the VAT system to go back to the old sales tax regime. The reason given is that too many taxpayers are getting away with cheating the ONE.

Even Senator Drilon complained the other day that, in a Bill report he had read, a restaurant would pay only 30 percent of the VAT collected. In other words, if Sen. Drilon ordered a steak dinner for P1,000, the restaurant would report to the BIR only P300 of the P100 VAT that he paid. May I answer Sen. Drilon that the restaurant would not necessarily be doing anything wrong.

Let me go to the basics, in VAT 101. You may ask, how come I know so much about the VAT system? Because, like all taxpayers beginning January in the middle of the season, collecting and paying the tax since 1987.

Here we go. The buyer pays the tax, the seller collects it for the BIR. Sen. Drilon pays P100 VAT on his steak dinner; the restaurateur collects it. This is called the output tax.

When it is time for the restaurant to remit the collection to the BIR, the restaurant is allowed to deduct the VAT on its purchases. If the raw steak was bought from a meat dealer for P700, the restaurant paid P70 VAT on it. This is called the input tax. The restaurant deducts this P70 input tax from the P100 VAT that Senator Drilon paid. Thus, the restaurant sends only P30 to the BIR. And it is all perfectly legal. This is how the VAT system works.

Another good thing about the VAT system is that the restaurateur has to make sure the P70 tax he paid to the meat dealer is duly remitted. Otherwise, the restaurant will have trouble deducting it from the P100 collected from Sen. Drilon. In the end, the BIR receives the P100 VAT from one source, P30 from the restaurant, P70 from the meat dealer. Notice that the P70 from the meat dealer is also probably remitted to the BIR long before then. Before paid for his steak dinner, the restaurateur can claim by inflating the cost of the raw steak. The raw steak might have cost P600 and it is passed on to Sen. Drilon for P700. The restaurateur deducts P70, but the BIR's enforcement pockets P20. But the eagle-eyed tax examiner can easily spot this, unless his eagle eyes are focused on something else.

Under the old sales tax system, the P70 tax, which the restaurateur paid the meat dealer, is added on to the P600 cost. In the old, Drilon would have paid P1,070, Sen. Drilon pays a sales tax of P107. The additional 37 is the sales tax on the sales tax of P70. This double taxation is avoided in the VAT system. Not only that, Sen. Drilon's steak dinner now costs P1,070 plus P107 sales tax, or a total of P1,177. In the end, the total sales tax of P170 from the meat dealer, and P107 from the restaurant, or a total sales tax of P277. The old sales tax system doubles that. Jacked up with multiple taxation.

In the guise of describing a supposedly distorted VAT system, Sen. Drilon is also off to the old sales tax system virtually a month way of taxing items.

The VAT system levels the playing field; everybody pays 10 percent. But the System we took him 26 lowest floors, 200 categories of goods and services that are exempt from the tax. There is a growing clamor to do away with the VAT system and return to the old sales tax system.

Nothing prevents any exporter or import-competing industry from demanding that the VAT system be scrapped. Only the VAT system is the most efficient tax system in the world. Only the VAT system is the most efficient tax system in the world. Only the VAT system is the most efficient tax system in the world.

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Stocks seen . . .

BPI Trade sales said that while weighted the market down were back of rising oil prices above the $40 a barrel level. "Volatile trading on unemployment and thin lines a negative impact" on company earnings. Magnifying this concern was the rise in inflation to 6 percent in July from 5.5 percent in June, due to higher transport fares and food prices, inflated for the first seven months hit an average of 4.3 percent, still within the 4-5 percent target set by the government.

Foreign investors unnerved by fears of fresh terror attacks overseas and Manila-sized over a court ruling putting a Manalo's rise hike plus sold down their holdings last week.

Selling pressure was reported on Globe-owned stocks after the opposition voters annulled a June 2003 decision by the SEC allowing Filtrades to raise power votes by 17 common per fishermen base.

Also ending weaker were Bank of the Philippine Islands, Ayala Corp., San Miguel Corp. despite seemingly unrelated acquisition of Australian beat price-maker Boral Ltd.

Investors, however, picked up telecom stocks like Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. and Globe Telecom on strong second-quarter earnings. PLDT reported a first-half profit at P12 billion while Globe said it earned P6.19 billion.

"The strong earnings of telecom and banking stocks suggest that the horrendous (net income) of most companies may be on the upswing. ABC also reasoned that its first half to June net profit rose to P4 billion, up 21 percent and the back of strong sales on the deposits and international markets. Investors will continue to watch out if this trend will be sustained," BPI Trade said.

But Aurie Tiaoqui of SB Capital Securities said that "with the high price of oil and the prevailing terrorism alert, there's a lot of pressure on the market can shoot down from."

"Going forward, there won't be much positive surprises expected that the remaining corporate earnings that have yet to be reported. Expectations for earnings growth in most companies have been a little too optimistic to expect. Moreover, the market is going to remain susceptible to oil prices. And any time we get some bad news in the price of oil, we are going to see some negative stock reaction," Tiaoqui wrote in his weekly report. (Elizabeth L. Sanchez)

Review of RP exports covered by EU preferential tariff sought

By Christine A. Saplcan

THE EUROPEAN Commission (EC) is undertaking a review of Philippine exports that are enjoying zero tariff under European Generalized Scheme of Tariff Preferences (GSP).

The review will be undertaken in the light of the declining Philippine exports to European countries in the last two years.

"We want to find out why if Philippines enjoys concessions in food exports) and why the utilization rate (of the GSP) is low," said Ambassador Jan de Jlek , head of the EC delegation to the Philippines, in a briefing last week.

The EC ambassador said he wanted to discuss with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo measures that would allow the Philippines to maximize the benefits of Europe's GSP scheme.

In a meeting with Agriculture Secretary Luis P.Lorenzo Jr. De Kok said that of the $1.7 billion in potential exports of the Philippines to the 25-nation European bloc under the GSP scheme, the Philippines was able to ship only $756 million worth of goods in 2003.

The amount was even lower by 1.9 percent from the $923 million worth the Philippines actually shipped to Europe in the previous year.

De Kok said that while the country's utilization rate of the GSP scheme increased from 38 percent in 2001 to 43 percent in 2002, it remained below average.

Under the GSP mechanism, Philippine products are enabled to enjoyed duties or preferential tariff rates. The Philippines was the 16th largest country user of the EU GSP scheme in 2002.

Among the Philippine exports that are entitled to preferential tariff rates are furs, fishery and food products, pharmaceuticals, footwear, clothing, textiles and industrial. Around 9,000 tariff rate of only 12 percent, or half the regular rate of 24 percent.

Europe's GSP scheme was implemented three years ago and will be reviewed in 2006. In December 2002, the EC issued an order extending the GSP scheme until Dec. 31, 2008.

Incentives for GFIs, GOCCs proposed

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE GOVERNMENT economic team is developing an incentive program for government-owned and -controlled corporations (GOCCs) and government financial institutions (GFIs) that will extend their revenue contribution. Measures to make them more self-reliant and less dependent on national government support, said Finance Undersecretary Marvel Davila.

Davila said the team, a Support Development Budget Coordinating Committee composed of the Department of Finance (DOF) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM)—would ask President Macapagal-Arroyo to issue an executive order granting incentives to deserving GOCCs and GFIs.

She said the government might use the same principle adopted by former President Corazon Aquino when she granted incentives to state-owned companies that exceeded their fiscal goals, through Executive Order 515.

"EO 518 was intended to encourage these (state-owned firms) to perform better, but for some reason it was never implemented. Now we want to take the same step," Davila told reporters.

President Arroyo's order was supposed to outmatch a certain portion of a well-performing GOCC or GFI's income for financial incentives to be issued by employees in the form of bonuses.

"The bottom line is we want to make state-owned companies financially self-sufficient," said Davila. She explained that reducing the dependence of GOCCs and GFIs on financial support from the government would help ease the country's serious budget deficit problem.

MBC picks best government agencies

THE THRIFT Business Club recently cited the Department of Agriculture as the third best performing agency of the government.

Business also joined the farm sector in praising the performance of the agency under Secretary Luis Lorenzo Jr.

These sectors cited the impressive growth of farm productivity and the "major steps taken by the Arroyo administration in ensuring the country's food sufficiency and security."

In MBC's survey in July, business executives gave the department a 64.4 net satisfaction rating which raised its ranking to No. 3 from No. 4 in January.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and the Department of Trade and Industry were named the top two best performing agencies.

The survey also showed that Lorenzo was among the top performers in President Macapagal-Arroyo's cabinet ranks, with close to 70 percent of the respondents strongly favoring his retention in the Cabinet.

The business community said Lorenzo was a key important player in the President's key policy agenda that includes jobs, food security and anti-poverty programs.

"It is difficult to comprehend why he has to leave the Cabinet when his programs were among the President's own top 10 objectives," they said. They pointed out that Lorenzo "has led the agriculture to its highest growth rate in 13 years."

Group backs Peza . . .

From page B1

promotion of 0.25 million shipments in 320 containers of used clothing materials from January 2003 to March 2004. Sun failed to account for a shortage of 7.79 million kilos of imported used clothing, and also failed to present documents to show what it did to scrap and recycle materials.

Also, Bond Clo had been fined heavily in 1999 when—with the use of private vehicles—it removed from the Mariveles customs 162 bales or about 4.9 tons of used clothing without Bureau approval.

Peza had warned the company then that "a similar violation in the future shall be dealt with the same severity and shall constitute a sufficient ground for the administrative cancellation of its registration with (Peza)."

Rene Rivas Peza assistant chief, the complaint, Bataan City Manufacturing Corp., is manufacturing-owned and is engaged in the recycling and processing of used clothing into wool fiber, cotton fiber, polyester fiber, spandex cloth, rag and industrial wiping rags.

Also last week, Peza director general Lilia de Lima vehemently denied accusations from Bond Clo plant manager Franklin Tayba that, along with fact-sales Peza officials, tried to extort from his company P3 million to avoid the audits.

MONDAY, AUGUST 9, 2004 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER B1

BUSINESS Monday

Business Features Editor Margie Quiniquiniquin

EQUITIES RESEARCH REPORT

'Money can't buy people happiness'

By Tina Arceo-Dumlao

THE RICH are rumored to perpetuate the myth that money can not buy happiness so that the poor would not envy them so much.

Different studies on human behavior since the days of the famous economist Adam Smith, however, show that the myth is true.

Money does not guarantee happiness. Really.

In 1998, visitors to the Pittsburgh International Airport were asked to rank from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important), a list of "things that might be important when it comes to making people happy."

They were then asked to assign percentages as to the importance of each factor in determining overall happiness.

Barely 16% ranked the highest, followed by friends and a satisfying job.

Having a high income received the lowest ranking and ranking, according to the study.

A 2000 study of 5,107 students across 31 countries also showed that those who valued money over rest were less satisfied about life than those who valued love over money.

These results were discussed in a report entitled, "The Psychology of Happiness," by James Meester of economist firm Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein.

The report said that aside from having fewer wrinkles and a better disposition, there are economic benefits to being happy.

On top of having more friends, a better marriage and a balanced immune system, people who consider themselves as "happy" are better workers, have more income and display greater creativity.

Meester said that the latest research suggests that happiness is the result of three factors.

The largest contributor is a genetic disposition to being "happy," inherited from parents, which accounts for about half of the happiness quotient.

Meester said the genetic disposition measures the "default level" of happiness that an individual enjoys.

"It is the level of happiness that an individual would have in the absence of other factors. Because the set point is genetically fixed, it is not something we can alter in order to improve our happiness for," he said.

Since not many of us are lucky enough to have happy parents to get the genes from, we have to look elsewhere if we want to rise from our grumpy lot.

This leads to the second component of happiness, which are circumstances.

These include demographic factors such as age, gender, ethnicity and geographic factors.

It also covers marital status, job security, health, income and religious affiliations.

"In general, married, well-paid, secure, healthy and religious believers are more likely to report themselves as being happier than the rest of us," Meester said.

The Meester study estimated that circumstances would account for 10 percent of the happiness score.

The rest is more framed by "intentional activity," which was defined as actions or practices that people choose to do.

The study broke down intentional activity into three areas.

Behavioral activities include exercising regularly, having sex, being kind to others and spending time socializing.

Cognitive exercises include looking at the bright side and pausing to count blessings.

Volitional activities, meanwhile, include striving for personal goals and devoting effort to meaningful causes.

As the name suggests, humans can alter their activities to increase their happiness.

Despite who feel depressed, for instance, could take up a physical activity or join a worship course. There, they would realize that they feel better about themselves.

The report said that people have a better chance of increasing their happiness scores by changing their activities, than it is to change their genetic make up or circumstances.

This will fall under the category of things that people can change. The students, to know that studies claim to look at a life with a permanent smile on their faces.

10 WAYS TO IMPROVE HAPPINESS

1. **Don't equate happiness with money.** People adapt to income really relatively quickly, the long-lasting benefits are essentially zero.
2. **Exercise regularly.** Taking regular exercise generates the like energy, and relieves the mind and the body.
3. **Have sex** (preferably with someone you love). Sex is consistently rated as among the highest pleasurers of happiness, for what are you waiting for?
4. **Devote time and effort to close relationships.** Close relationships require work and effort, but pay vast rewards in terms of happiness.
5. **Pause to—reflection, meditate on the good things in life.** Simple reflection on the good aspects of the world fosters happiness.
6. **Seek work that engages your skills, look to enjoy your job.** It makes sense to do something you enjoy. This is more likely to allow you to flourish of your job, creating pleasant feedback loop.
7. **Give your body the shape it needs.**
8. **Don't pursue happiness for its own sake, enjoy the moment.** Trashy personal of what makes you happy, may lead to the wrong pursuits. Additionally, activities may become a means to an end, rather than something to be enjoyed, defeating the purpose in the first place.
9. **Take control of your life, set yourself achievable goals.**
10. **Remember to follow all the rules.**

Sending jobs out viable, S&P says

LONDON—Credit profiles among Europe's business services providers are benefiting from the continued trend toward outsourcing, and are supported by low capital intensity and healthy free cash flows, according to a research report published today by Standard & Poor's Ratings Services.

The report, which identifies key industry characteristics and success factors, provides a framework for the analysis of business service companies across the region.

The business services industry encompasses a wide range of **sectors**, with broad segments covering facility services (cleaning, hygiene, food, and security services) and professional services (staffing and advertising agencies, and consulting services). Generally rated companies in this sector are large diversified industry leaders, with expansionary growth strategies and moderate financial profiles.

"The business services industry enjoys positive credit characteristics, with the prospect of continued growth due to outsourcing. Furthermore, service providers feature flexible cost bases and low capital intensity that help generate healthy free operating cash flow," said Standard & Poor's credit analyst Alf Steinpreis.

LIFESTYLE

Editor Cielo Bunal-Formoso
Associate Editor Lito Zulueta

MONDAY ARTS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY IBIU • THURSDAY FOOD • FRIDAY HOME & FASHION • SUNDAY SURPRISES

18 ways of looking at a mall

"UNTITLED #18 (Paint in Reserve for Future Use)," by Ho Tzu Nyen

By Constantino C. Tejero

TWO PRELIMINARY art gallerists in malls is creating the ultimate image of art: It demonstrates art, bringing the so-called high culture to the masses. Now any bone-weary mallrat and dizzy shopper may savor a gallery replenish their energies, nourish their souls, even contemplate the divine.

In a trend of many, six exhibits is holding up a portrait of mall culture for mall-goers to see, complete: commodities, gadgets, consumer's habits, furniture, sensational details. In effect, the artworks themselves become commodities on display.

"Display," curated by Gwenda Tan and organized by Frank Art Fair, is presented by The Podium at its 3/F (ongoi until Aug. 15. The exhibit brings together six contemporary artists from the Philippines and Singapore, all in their late 20s.

Lim Shing Ee has created what appear like mass-produced toys piled on the floor. "Mono" is a mound of palm-size gray objects of polyester fiber, velcro, fabric, with patches of yellow, pink, red, orange, blue, pink, green.

"Dr Dginar" a furry black objects of polyester fiber with tail like appendages of black and white stripes, of different sizes, with stainless steel balls inside.

"I see these objects as sculptures—soft sculptures," says the artist, who holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from Musashino Art University in Tokyo.

Cute but edgy

Another collection of soft sculptures is by Claire Lim Shuen Shih. The bits and pieces, mostly toys and kiddy accessories, are pinned on a wall, appearing like a mosaic of found objects, a fun relief of odds and ends, or a mural of candy-colors.

They're actually individual artworks with such titles as "Portrait of a Girl," "Tales Untold," "Portrait of a Boy," "Portraits of Unconscious," "Stuffed Mocha, Butterflies and Fishes."

"I like soft sculptures," says the artist, "because they're so cuddly, so close to childhood. They may not be as enduring as stone or metal but they do last."

She admits to having been influenced by the glitzy imagery of Takashi Murakami. Another influence is the clamorking work of Yayo Yoshimoto, whose cute but naughty girls evoke implied violence.

There is French artist and transformist Anna Efimenger, whose installations and soft sculptures are "powerful art, works that speak very strongly."

Various mediums

Claire Lim Shuen Shih, who has a Master in Visual Arts from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, also paints. She used to do abstract, but now she's into figures, particularly of animals, cops.

She says she's comfortable with watercolor, oil and mixed media. "Medium depends on inspiration, convenience, usually what's available at the moment."

Lim Shing Ee, who does mainly installations, she paints. She particularly likes oil "because the color looks delicious, the sensation [of applying it] is very good, and it looks creamy."

She adds that acrylic is very plastic but she doesn't want up to it because it's "very stiff, and it looks flat and faded."

Her pieces in oil on canvas, "Spoke" and "Probable Existence," depict biomorphic forms rendered smooth and flat. Soft like, which she says have been inspired by fables and its associations ("depending on things, connecting pie-

CONTINUED ON A11

"SPOKE," by Lim Shing Ee

LIFESTYLE

A bridge to the past

ALL4ART

Ben Zobel Jr.

Tayabas and Sariaya in Quezon hold surprise heritage riches

It was one of our longest trips ever. Driven in the evening, and we were just limping home. It was really tiring...but it was worth it.

My friend Jun had invited me on a trip around the provincial towns of Quezon. This was in preparation for an exhibit at the Met.

Our first stop was Tayabas, cradled in the bowels of Banahaw, the sacred mountain. We were warmly welcomed by their mayor Jun-Jun Ildong. He fed us a delicious breakfast.

Among the conspicuous tidbits that I briefly noted before devouring was a bread called hopia. It was warm and pebbly, tasting of things fried and rolled. It was wonderful with hot scrambled eggs and tomatoes.

Happily fortified, we were off to explore the town. Actually Ermil's place, 18 Casa en Frontera, is a destination in itself. The restaurant is quite pretty and cozy. There is an inn with rooms designed by Ermil himself. Such a versatile young man: a dancer, an actor, and restaurateur/keeper!

In the garden is an incredible display of stone implements from grinders for grain to lime and troughs. There are also three-wheeled carved from rock which, I was told were used for an elaborate ritual.

Next stop was the Casa de Comunidad. This is like a town hall in the 19th century, recently restored. When we were there, there was an exhibit made by the young people of the town, "World Heritage in Young Hands," organized by the Met.

In a subsequent trip (yes, I went back!) I had a chance to see another Met exhibit, the traveling show "Lovers Figures." This included a dynamic workshop where the kids painted right on the sidewalk. I remember thinking then that this was the kind of activity that would probably get me jailed by Bayani Fernando!

To return to our circuit, another stop was Tayabas Church. I am told this temple is one of the grandest that the Franciscans ever built in the Philippines.

Among its features is a magnificent altar piece of tropical fruits, believe me, it takes time to get all these forms right. What is an amazing altar it is, if one looks carefully, one can make out among the leaves many leaves and flowers cleverly concealed fish motifs!

I am told church scholar Ricky Jose has noted a similar design in Vigan. He also saw this face in the form pattern in the altar pieces in Bataan, Bulacan.

Translator

Given my interest, it was no surprise I was asked to translate the Spanish inscription on an elaborate wooden bench near the altar. As you can imagine, the carving

A BRIDGE TO C4

RAMBUTAN scallops in the Philippine house in Sariaya

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WHAT'S ON AT ROBINSONS
a world to discover

18 ways of looking at a mall

"PHILSMALL" (detail), by Billy Alberto

gle over food and drink").

But says she can't. She has other, better reasons, and wants to leave town "very tempted by Dada." More than three-fourths are Dadaist installations set in Black Mondays, the American Airmail blockbuster Fred Eka.

Dynamic use

An unconventional way with paint is demonstrated by the witty pieces of Ito Nava, who has a Bachelor of Creative Arts from University of Melbourne and is also a filmmaker.

The artist's characteristic use of paint results in depth, as he alludes to "Untitled #1" (Chosen to Represent in Future Use) "Mixed on "old pieces of textured boxes," it's actually a mixture of small box-type frames of bleached wood and glass containing layers of paint in red, yellow and blue.

The pigments have been squeezed layer by layer down from the sides, then pressed with the glass plates. The whole composition looks like folded, lacquered shelves.

"Standard #12," inkjet and varnish on canvas, reads traditional painting and digital technology. Here canvas has been painted three times, shredded, smeared, smeared on the computer, printed on another canvas, then varnished. The effect looks like sort of complex pieces of paper in red, blue, yellow, pink, orange, brown and black, on a flatscreen.

Enigmatic piece

Installations that are more complex are created by Billy Alberto, who has a Bachelor of Fine Arts, major in Painting, from University of the Philippines.

A bright and enigmatic piece is his "Rosacea I Decision II, No. 11." "Mini Rosacea" is developed on the scale of three museum cubes. It is done in the manner of Jane Rivera, particularly Blythe Mori's mini-walls and neon light signage "Eternal City" or Jose Rizal's diorama, a see-light panels immersed "Untitled (To the Children of the Republic of Rizal)..."

Like the Mori piece, this one may also be a statement on "the artificial and transitory nature of contemporary urban life," or a statement on "the failure/impoverishment of modern technological culture." And like the Rizal piece, it also poses the question "Where does the art begin, and where does it end?

On the other hand, it could also be plain extravagance. In the artist's words, it's just his way of showing "the effect of fluorescent light on the skin." Indeed, it avoids the deception lighting in wet markets that makes meat to make their meat, fish and vegetables look fresh.)

Hysterical image

Alberto's "Photofall" is more complicated, as it involves photographic prints, all on canvas, TV monitor, surveillance camera.

The paintings, in black and gold, is an extreme close-up of a detail from an image he photographed in the mall, then printed on the canvas with some multi-black imprints on parts, until it is unrecognizable.

The camera also focuses on the photographic image of women around the viewers and passersby, often deliberately before themselves upon entering the gadgets. ("Don't mall culture be you.")

Lito Meng Ee comments that in the the young talents of the Philippines and Singapore are similar. "Life are moving into multimedia, video," she says.

Ben Arienza would rather be known as a painter. Oil is his preferred medium, and he set it figuratively, albeit fragmented figures.

Previous artists include El Greco, Rizal's Philippine sculptor Guillermo Tolentino, Mexican painter Juan Rulfo, the "El" cousins Rubenes Chaiken, the exhibit's curator Corey Kin, Mark Rothko.

Mall signage

Cory Rose Hermes, another UP College of Fine Arts graduate, is represented by two large paintings and a painting on Arches canvases.

"Work," in oils on canvas, is a rendering in black with splattering of grey. "Shadows," acrylic and collage on canvas, is grey with splashes of white, black and red. Ostensibly inspired by mall signage, there could also be viewed as something else (Rock of ages cosmetic accident, general's autopsy?).

Mel Yu, also from UP, has seven paintings and a collection of photographs taken inside and outside the mall.

The paintings are not her abstractions or impressionistic observations, which would make them quite abstract. "Triumph," in general on canvas, consists of stripes of grey, orange, blue, white and green. "The Arrogance Riddle," oil on canvas, has unrecognizable shapes in red, green, pink, yellow and brown.

"Memory" is a phantasmagoria of discordant images in the mall: Belgian chocolates, signage of shops such as "PCCC," "Laundry" Chinese characters, shelves of books, signs and restaurants, chandeliers, candles and colorful lights, and hundreds of others.

These images, both disappearing and fragmented, seem to have similar sympathies and are passive. As artist with the young, they seem to be thinking the same thoughts. What they see in the mall obviously go far beyond the mall.

Going global

Lito Meng Ee says that as artist consumes images in our world, artist. "But actually it is not what you see them." She feels as an artist "more future-minded, maybe because of the education system, the influences of TV, radio, even art."

She adds: "But I see it as just being global. We're just trying to be more universal. I have respect for Asian artists who nevertheless retain

"PORTRAITS of Decorations," by Cherry Lyn Chua-Gob

a traditional element. But I would rather be more forward-looking than look back too much to the past."

Claire Liz Chua-Gob agrees: "Yes, Gogh, Picasso, Matisse—everything is starting. Who do something else's already done? The Masters are already there."

She continues: "Our culture is very different from those of other peoples, because we're a melting pot. We can't deny that. Our identity has come a bit different from Chinese. I think we're in between."

"But studying in Singapore is really cool every... If you want to exhibit today, you apply for a permit with the Censorship Board, they try to know your endeavor. But we for one is more of self-expression than to change the world. I just want to inspire people."

Onglepho's color of music and poetry

SINCE his birthday exhibit with colleagues Malang and Gia Cruz at the Ayala Art Gallery last January, Jaime Onglepho has been busy painting. Perhaps the most important of his works are the floral painting "Sharing" and the magnificent landscape series "Rising Sun."

In the latter, he again demonstrates his unique painting style. Landscapes, in fact, have been recognized as the most important subject matter in Chinese painting for over a thousand years, a tradition that Onglepho, who is of Chinese descent, is proud to carry on through this day.

"Chinese landscape painting is one of the great manifestations of the human spirit, and is the most remarkable creation of the Chinese artistic genius," Onglepho said.

Known as shan shui, Chinese landscape painting dates back to more than a thousand years. Onglepho said landscapes had long been a mainstream subject in Chinese painting, unlike in Western painting which merely placed landscape as background to the human figure. It was only in the 19th century when the Impressionists started treating landscape as an independent subject.

The main difference between Chinese and Western landscapes is perspective. Western painters usually go on location and paint landscapes on the spot. What they come up with is objective scenery, a representation of nature.

On the other hand, ancient Chinese painters would only observe and gather impressions of nature. They would paint only in their studios, composing objects on the canvas by using ideas and emotions. What they come up with, just like Onglepho's surreal landscapes, are subjective scenery.

"RISING SUN"

Technique

Onglepho said ancient Chinese painting developed into major techniques. The multiple combining point technique gives a painting its solid, compact composition. The emotions and thoughts of the artist are emphasized, and the "deformation" of the subject matter makes way for the realm of fantasy.

Three don'ts the technique of exaggeration Onglepho's "Rising Sun" series has prominence, contrast, movement that provide a vast expanse for visual momentum.

Onglepho's landscapes then are not mere representations of nature but infinite reproductions of his imagination. The imposing, grand and magnificent images of the mountains are not based on original forms and colors of nature. They are products of creative planning and chance color combinations. Onglepho calls them the "color of music and poetry."

He sees the viewpoint of a poet in observing the landscape of the real world. He first expresses his own visual language. The result is a "dreamscape," an expression of a private artistic concept.

Onglepho studied painting at University of Santo Tomas before taking up Fine Arts in 1984. Fifty years of discipline, excessive training and continuous expert instruction all contributed to the development of his unique painting style.

Yet he is never satisfied in succeed only after he has achieved is more than 20 one-man exhibits here and abroad. He always sees himself as a beginner, continually learning about art.

He said the three foundations of learning were "seeing much, suffering much and studying much."

"The more a man learns, the more and more he sees his ignorance," Onglepho said.

"SHARING"

Kalay sa Tubig aquarelle exhibit opens Aug. 14

THE 21ST Kalay sa Tubig annual invitational watercolor competition exhibition of Gallery Genesis opens on Aug. 14 in the Art Center, 6/L Megastar LA. Awarding of winners will be held at 4 p.m. on the same day. The exhibit runs until Aug. 29.

Organized by Gallery Genesis, the watercolor fair marks its ninth year. The accent will announce five winners and five runners-up.

CALL 5208137 to 38.

"SABUNGERO," by Raul Olbarete

"LORDS of the Abyss," by Roland Santos

"MEXICAN Sombrero," by Leonardo Reyes

A bridge to the past

From page C3

recorded for posterity the name of the pious donor.

Perhaps what is Tayabas' most impressive landmark is its fantastic five-span bridge, the Malagonlong. This was built way back in 1890. It is handsomely proportioned with its graceful arches and finely shaped cutwaters. Right at the center of the span is an inscription celebrating the builders.

Adjacent to the River Park (who really admires this piece of our heritage?) showed us this, by hacking up at the underside of the bridge, the entire arched with leaves, commemorative marks. What a fascinating glimpse of the past—even as the local officials were setting up inscription glorifying their names, the humble masons who did most of the real work were finding ways to quietly leave something of themselves behind.

Unfortunately, the view of this majestic bridge has been somewhat robbed by a new one built right beside it.

Lunch was at the office of a local NGO, Kalandukan. Our host was local historian Jun Bedia. We were treated to a fantastic feast, mostly prepared by Ana.

On the menu were pako salad (fresh, picked from the forest, pinais, which is cuisine with kamansha leaves and fresh water shrimps; as well as lying. In case there were still empty spaces in our stomachs, dessert was a formidable cassava pudding called bukayo by the locals.

After lunch, it was time to head for Lucban. We passed briefly to see the seat of the Franciscans (two sets intertwined before a road) curved on a wall.

Sariaya is famous for its beautiful houses. Dominating everything is the fabulous Blumpoo mansion designed by Andres Luna de San Pedro. Inside the house is one of the most stunning sets of Art Deco furniture that I have ever seen.

Another beautiful home is the Pedrajano house, which is now a restaurant called Nasi at Nipayan. The owners very graciously allowed us to explore the interiors. There is a lovely second of a garden room on one side. But what is truly breathtaking were the ceilings.

Every room has painted deco coverhead that has a different theme or motif. My favorite is the stenciled Chinese rice swaying-and sophistication that went into the decorative elements of these home environments.

Spanish night

Our day ended with dinner at Villa Escudero. There, we reviewed what we saw that day. We all agreed that the highlights were the Tayabas bridge and the kitchen ceilings.

We decided to take advantage of our inability to present because of restaurants, to forever use last heroes. He pointed out that Tayabas was actually the only capital from the Spanish colonial period to be built in the mountains. The Spanish invented cities on flat lands—arrived bridges, a huge church, a town hall, plus Dano chapels. Why?

Perhaps it was because they had to emphasize Spanish might in contrast to that great power center of Philippine culture—Mt. Banahaw.

For reservation Mr. Banahaw area a sanctuary of Filipinos, its slopes shelltwined infinite, rainbows, saffrons, sanctuaries and mystics. It still plays the role today.

It was truly an inspiring lecture but I am afraid that we all probably fell asleep while listening.

Recalling that fulfilling day, there is one sad note. On my subsequent trip to Tayabas, I was horrified to see a cavalry right blue prize—but had been brutally converted into the fragile structure of Malagonlong Bridge. What a travesty!

Why couldn't we have more respect for our lovely heritage monuments? Why do we continue to wreck our heritage? I hope someone has done something to restore the bridge's integrity.

Every time we deface an old bridge, every time we wreck an ancestral house or tear down the beams of an ancient church, we destroy pieces of ourselves. But unsafe what are actually little windows into the hearts of our ancestors. We shatter the little messages they have so lovingly left us: marks on stones, fruits delicately painted on ceilings, faces among silver forms.

When will this destruction stop?

E-mail comments to ikaw@philippinedailyinquirer.com.ph or write to Filipino Heritage Library, Makati Ave., Ayala Triangle, Makati City.

ART Deco chairs in the Marquez mansion

Art Attack magazine holds art contest

TO CAP the creative abilities of Filipino students, Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. launches Art Attack Art Attack Pinoy, a large-format art contest.

The contest coincides with the launch of Art Attack Magazine by MPI, an 'attack is the popular show in Disney Channel hosted by Neil Buchanan, who teaches and demonstrates art works and creative activities to the show.

MPI recently got the license to publish the Attack Magazine from Fun Characters Inc., the licensing licensee of The Walt Disney Co. The Philippine edition will be the first English version of the magazine and will be available to local bookstores by September.

The contest is open to students enrolled in the current school year, ages 7-12. Contestants need to form a team of five who will work on their "art attack." Students must submit application forms for pre-registration.

But the complete set of requirements, call 8152324 or 8163197. The contest requires the participants to use recycled materials.

Some P100,000 worth of prizes are at stake.

The contest will have three phases. The first is the elimination round on Aug. 28 at Ilisaro Pandacan. About 32 teams will be the semi-finals on in the second phase of the contest in September, where 15 teams will be chosen.

The 15 will compete in the contest on Oct. 3 at Alabang Town Center.

"FLUTE Player," by Samuel Vista

Where art and fellowship thrive

By Gary Dominguez
Contributor

WHAT better proof of the flourishing art business than the proliferation of galleries today—orchards, hotels, resorts, offices and even homes? Some of them have regrettably closed down, citing bad business or excessive overhead costs, but many others have taken their place.

One gallery that has not merely survived but overcame the odds is Galerie Joaquin, thanks to the business savvy of its proprietor, Jack Kinsley.

"BOUQUET of Roses," by Dig de Pio

A former mechanic, businessman and trade specialist, who has opted to stay put despite his family's decision to move to the United States, Kinsley knows the art scene inside out. It is true at least 10 years of solid experience waiting on the sun, doing the extraordinary work, and engaging himself in the complexities of the art business.

The gallery promotes quality contemporary art. It is open to artists, young and old. It is accessible to its clientele, many of whom are also not starting like the gallery is not seriously involved in art.

But the gallery has another asset—a well-knit group of artists who, though a generation apart and with divergent styles, remains deeply committed to art: the Guernsey Emerged Artists.

Though the majority is fairly young, the Guernsey Group has veterans artists in its roster such as Jimmie Torres, Dig de Pio, Andi Cobb, Lydia Velarde, Egui Hernandez, Anabi Salinas and concluding with the Cuba Magno, who began joining the group's sessions early recently.

Its theme and landscape painting sessions, lectures and innovative enhancements and fashion designers have helped expose the members to the work of other artists. An experience only a few could claim has to pursue for at her own unique vision.

"HIJA BULONG si Panggingi," by Jason Dela Cruz

Where art. . .

From page C2

Even the relatively young artists—figurative artists Dominic Rubio, Bayani Ray Acala and Initials Troy Reyes, Michael Velasco and Vincent de Paz as well as abstractionists Gino Gustavo and Karina Balaquit—have impressively honed their talents through this two years' working within the gallery system.

The fellowship and the individual flowering are evidence to their claim for the gallery's second-year anniversary, in which each artist exhibits 3-5 of what they consider their best pieces.

While there are surprises in store for the gallery goers who has followed the growth of the young artists, the real revelation is Velasco. His ballerina series in mixed media shows a mature fluidity with his medium.

Ditto with Troy Reyes, now more engaging in his portraits of ballerinas, and Velasco, who has gone a long way from his early landscapes and evolved a more powerfully expressive style.

The show reveals the deeply growth of these artists, thanks to the nurturing atmosphere of the gallery owners coupled with each artist's active pursuit of his craft.

The gallery has also inaugurated its new outlet at the Louvre G/F of The Podium, and has invited a number of innovative shows and tie-ups with musicians and other artists.

Young print master

The Philippine Association of Printmakers has announced its roster of winners in its Annual Open Print Competition. I happen to have taken part in the selection of winners, together with Abet Lim, Pandy Aviado, Tiny Sojuela and Jean Marie.

During the judging, one lithograph stood out from the rest because of its powerful imagery and commanding rendering. Titled "Mga Bulong sa Hanging," the work offers a surreal feast with its mesmerizing panoply of strange-looking creatures and fantastical species. It shows a triad of eyes both in usual location and in the mouth.

The artist, as we found out soon enough, is an 18-year-old Fine Arts student from University of the Visayas, Jason Bacasdre Delacruz, the son of noted artist Pil Delacruz, who, during the awarding ceremonies, admitted he had an inkling his son has been so crazy to the nth.

As the grand prize winner in this year's 50th Open Print Competition, the young Delacruz has raised the hopes of aspiring printmakers everywhere. The quality of this year's entries also merited the judges' interest, like myself, who couldn't help but revel at the spirit of experimentation and innovation that prevailed in the works of many participants.

It was a country where the young, the youthful and the innovative broke new ground, raising the standards of printmaking and redirecting the art scene with their vigor and dynamism.

Congratulations to the PAP board led by its president Raul Isidro, Benji Arriado, Ann Shawe, Jackie Abalos and the rest of the officers for adhering to the highest standards of art-making.

An exhibit of the entries is ongoing until Aug. 10 at the Art Center of the Artwalk, 4/L, Bldg. A, 104 Hagatnull, Mandaluyong City.

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"BALLERINA at Rosa," by Initials Troy Reyes

PAP president Raul Isidro (left) hands out the gold medal and certificate to first prize winner Jason Delacruz, while the guest of honor looks on.

"THE BATH," by Bayani Ray Acala